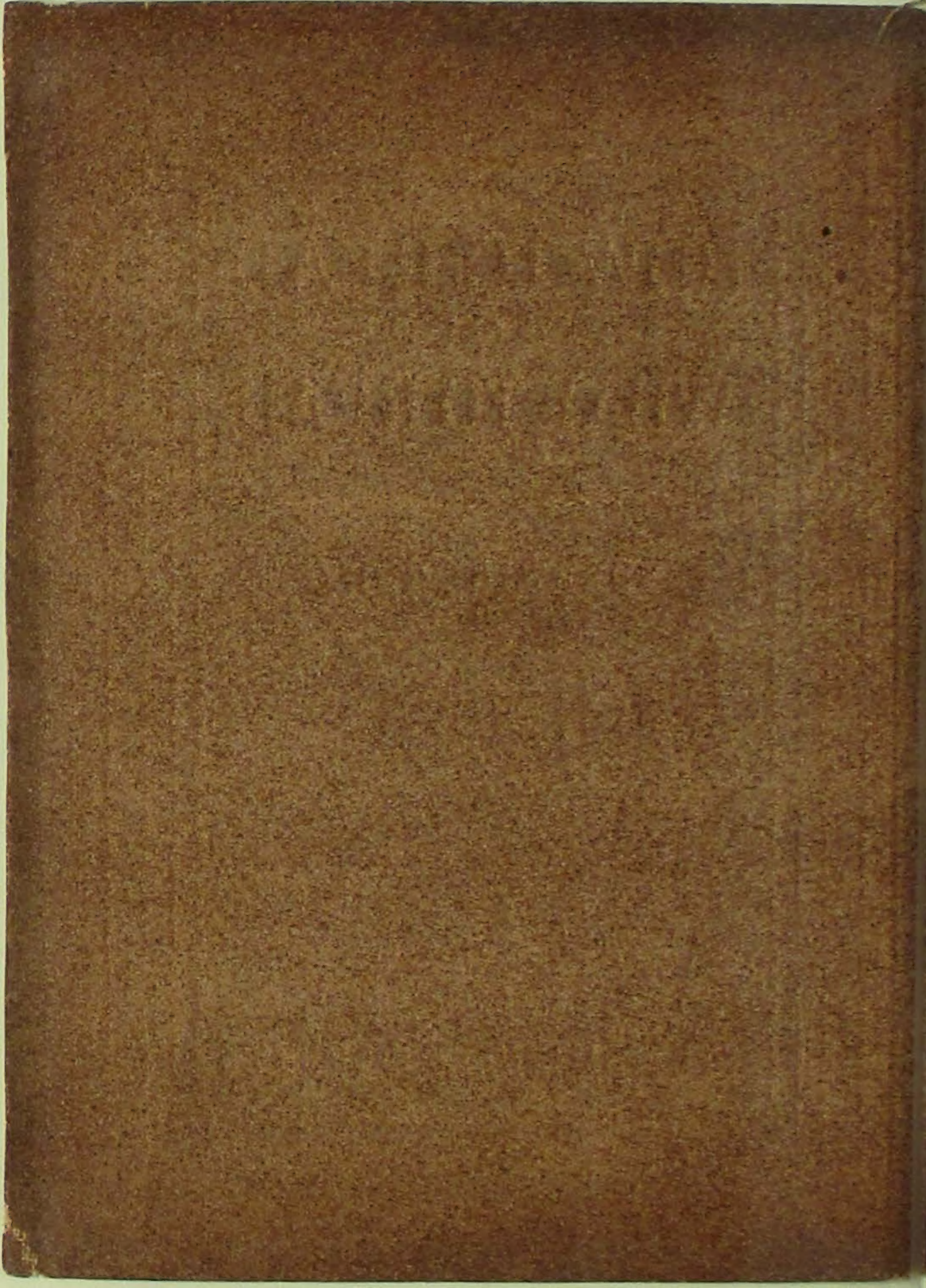
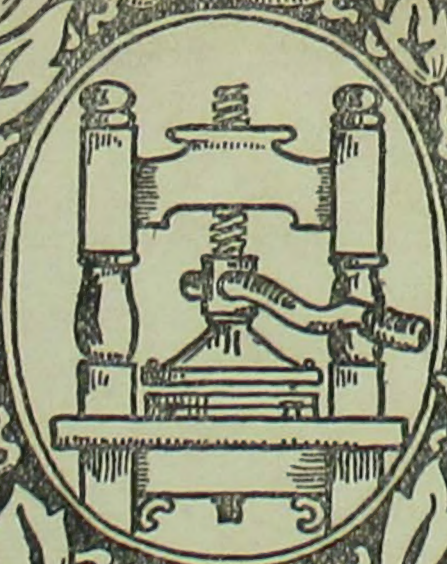


HOW TO READ
AND
WHAT TO READ

CHARLES F. KEMP

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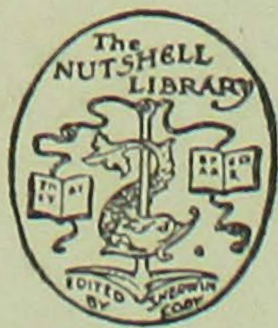




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HOW TO READ *AND* WHAT TO READ

By Sherwin Cody



SHERWIN CODY SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

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BY SHERWIN CODY

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PREFACE

There are plenty of books telling what we should read if we were wise and judicious scholars, with all the time in the world; and there are lists of the Hundred Best Books, as if there were some magic in the figures 100.

This little book is for the average man who reads the newspaper more than he ought, and would like to know the really interesting books in standard literature which he might take pleasure in reading and which might be of some practical benefit to him.

I have begun by leaving out nearly all the ancient classics. Demosthenes's *For the Crown* is a great oration, but it is utterly dry and uninteresting to the ordinary modern. Even the great Goethe, while he may be the best of reading for a German, is not precisely adapted to the needs of the average American or Englishman. His novels are too sentimental; and his great poem *Faust*, like all poems, loses too much in the translation.

And then to come down to our own literature, I must admit that I know that all the conservative professors of English will be shocked at the omission of Chaucer (but his language is too antiquated to be easily understood), Pope (who is more quoted than any other English poet except Shakspeare, but ought to be read only in a book of quotations),

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Samuel Richardson (who is important historically, but whose novels are as dead as a door-nail), and some others.

Literature is not great absolutely, but it is useful and inspiring to those who read it. What has been inspiring once may have served its purpose, and when it is no longer inspiring it ought to be put away on the library shelves.

But of the good and interesting books there are a great many more than any one person can ever hope to read. We have but a little time in this life, and in reading we ought to make the best of it. So what shall we choose?

First of all a book must be interesting if it is going to help us; but at the same time if it is a great book and can inspire us, our time is spent to double or treble the advantage that it would be if it were only a good book. If we can read the *best* books and not merely good books, we have actually added some years to our life, measuring life by what we crowd into it.

But no man can be another's sole guide and do his thinking for him. Every man must have standards and principles, and be able to judge for himself. Such standards for judgment I have tried in this book first of all to give by simple illustrations.

So far as I know nearly every one who has written about books has recommended volumes in the lump, as Wordsworth's Poems, Lamb's Essays, Scott's novels, etc., as if every collection between covers were good all the way through.

The fact is, great books need to be sifted in them-

selves, as well as great collections of books. Only a few poems of Wordsworth's or Coleridge's or Keats's or Shelley's or Tennyson's or Longfellow's are first rate, and all the others in their complete works would better be left out as far as the average man I have in mind is concerned. Even the great novels have to be skimmed, and it is not every one who knows how to do that. I am therefore desirous of giving assistance not only in the selection of volumes, but of the contents of each volume recommended.

I have tried my hand already with some success as far as the public is concerned in selecting "The Greatest Short Stories", "The Best English Essays", "The World's Great Orations" and the work of "The Great English Poets." It is now my hope to offer the public in convenient, well printed, prettily bound volumes a Nutshell Library of the World's Best Literature for English Readers. Unlike other compilations of this kind it will not be a collection of fragments and patchwork, so comprehensive that it includes thousands of things one does n't care for, and so selective that it leaves out four fifths of the things one does want especially. In my library I shall make each volume complete in itself and an interesting evening's reading. The reader will be pleasantly introduced to the author as man and man-of-letters, so that he will know him the next time he meets him, and will get on terms of something like familiarity with him.

It is now almost impossible for the ordinary business man or even the busy woman of the house to read many books. Sometimes we get started on the

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latest novel, recommended by a friend, and sacrifice enough time to finish it; then we are usually sorry we did it. And yet we know that the delicate enjoyment of life is in our cultivation of leisure in a refined and noble way. For all of us life would be better worth living, would be fuller of satisfaction and more complete in accomplishment, if we could spend a certain amount of time every day or every week with the world's best society. This I hope to make it practically possible for many to do.

This little volume lays down the principles and maps out the field. It is entirely complete in itself; but at the same time it introduces an undertaking which I hope may develop into wide usefulness.

I may add that only books that may properly be called "literature" are here referred to, and even orations are omitted, because they are meant to be heard and not read in a closet and most people will not find them inspiring reading. Neither have I ventured into history, science, philosophy, or economics.

I desire to thank Dr. E. Benj. Andrews, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska, Mr. Fred. H. Hild, Librarian of the Chicago Public Library, and Mr. W. I. Fletcher, editor of the American Library Association's Index to General Literature and Librarian of Amherst College, for valuable assistance in preparing the list of books recommended.

SHERWIN CODY.

HOW TO READ AND WHAT TO READ

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF LITERATURE.

The best modern usage restricts the word *literature* to that which deals with the human heart and emotion, including intellectual emotion. That into which no feeling can enter is not literature. So a pure scientific treatise is not literature; neither is a simple historical record literature, as for example the news in a newspaper. Indeed, all histories, treatises, philosophical works, and textbooks and handbooks are literature only in such cases as an appeal is made to the universal heart or the emotions common to mankind.

A little psychology will help us to understand the matter better. The mind has three aspects: the intellectual, which gives us truth; the ethical, which gives us nobility; and the esthetic, which gives us beauty. It is really impossible to separate one of these things from the other entirely; but we may say that in science we have nothing but the intellectual, or truth; in religion nothing but the ethical, or nobility; and in art nothing but the

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esthetic, or beauty. But as a religion without truth or beauty would be a very poor affair, so art without truth or nobility would be almost inconceivable.

Literature is far more than art. Of course literature must be artistic: it must have the esthetic element of beauty; but it must also have both nobility and truth; and it must make its appeal through the emotions, that is, its appeal must be human. Possibly we must admit that all art is human, that its appeal is emotional; but this is not true of all beauty, for a mathematical hyperbola or parabola is perfectly beautiful, and it has its part in all drawing of artistic beauty; but the parabola or hyperbola does not become art except when executed by the human hand in making an appeal to human emotions.

Distinctions between truth, nobility, and beauty are merely for the sake of helping our thought. That which is noble must be true and it must be beautiful. That which is lacking in truth is lacking also in beauty. This, however, we are not always able to discover without analysing. Something may seem beautiful while we are thinking of beauty alone; but let us test its nobility or its truth, and if these are wanting we suddenly discover defects in the beauty we had not perceived before.

Who of us has not seen a woman who seemed at first to be perfectly beautiful, but whom we afterward found to be lacking in intellect or character. On re-examining the beauty we discover a weak mouth, inexpressive eyes, and other defects which may in time quite spoil the perfection of form

we had admired so much at first, and we wonder how we could overlook these defects. The fact is, one supreme quality is likely to blind us to all defects until we cease to gaze upon that quality and hunt for others.

If we are literary critics, the first quality of literature that is likely to attract our attention is that of artistic beauty, which usually shows itself especially in the style. The musical flow of the words, the aptness and grace of the images, the refinement in the choice of words, make style, which, like charity, is a garment which covers a multitude of sins. If we are students, we look at the truth of the statements, their accuracy, their real significance, and talk about the poem's or the story's "depth" or lack of depth. But the common reader is more likely to judge the literary work by its nobility; in a novel such a reader wants characters he can admire and imitate, in a poem he wants thoughts that will inspire. Often to such a reader the lack of truth and of beauty are not even perceived. We see that which we look for, and fail to see that in which we have no interest.

But what part does amusement play in real literature? We hear that the "star of the public amuser is in the ascendant." Is the novel any the less literature for being amusing? or may it amuse without being literature?

But let us see what amusement is. An alternative term is *recreation*, which means literally "being created anew." Any escape from the routine of life into an atmosphere which is harmonious with our

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faculties for enjoyment is recreation. Amusement is the antithesis of work. A book the reading of which contains no suggestion of labour is a perfect recreation, since it allows our overworked faculties to rest and calls into play those faculties which otherwise would lie fallow and ultimately become stunted and dead. When we speak of a book as "amusing" we mean that it affords a complete relaxation to our faculties; but such complete relaxation is not altogether necessary to perfect recreation, for we may exercise one set of faculties while relaxing another. Literature is and should be relaxing to those faculties that are worn out by the dull routine of life; but any statement that a novel should be *merely* amusing, *merely* relaxing, is decidedly untrue to the facts in the case. The public does want recreation; we all want it; we all need it; it is one of the highest offices of literature to give it; but *mere* relaxation of wearied faculties will never create us anew. For true re-creation we must have that in literature which has been named *creative*,—something positive, vital, strong, and human. It is the duty of all great literature to be interesting. That which has ceased to be interesting is dead, and the quicker it is buried the better. The fact is, however, that no efforts at embalming or preservation on the part of critics will keep before the public that which the public chooses to bury.

And this brings us to another question. What part has popularity in true literature? Some swear only by that which is very popular; and others curse

the masses of the people, declaring that they like that which is bad for its very badness, wallowing in filth and the common-place, loving sentimentality in preference to true sentiment, and seeking in fiction only excitement of their passions. Such a view is libellous. As Lincoln once said in regard to other matters, You can deceive all the people part of the time and part of the people all the time, but you cannot deceive all the people all the time. We must confess that the public is always wandering after a will-o'-the-wisp; but at all times the public as a whole, we must believe, is seeking the good. It does not love the bad merely because it is bad; but it swallows the bad because it wants the grain of good it can get in no other way. And with the element of time added, it is the public that makes "the verdict of posterity" which all reverence. We must not forget, however, the element in the equation called Time; for that Time may reduce the equation to zero and prove that our unknown quantity is nothing.

And now let us ask what relation any work of literary art ought to have to our lives of toil. If it merely gives us a picture of our actual lives it cannot be interesting or amusing, since we want to get away from ourselves and exercise new faculties and have new experiences. On the other hand, we understand only what we live, and if we get too far away from our own experiences we are equally at a loss. The fact is, a work of literature should give us ourselves idealized and in a dream, all we wished to be but could not be, all we hoped for but

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missed. True literature rounds out our lives, gives us consolation for our failures, rebuke for our vices, suggestions for our ambition, hope, and love, and appreciation. To do that it should have truth, nobility, and beauty in a high degree, and our first test of a work of literature should be to ask the three questions, Is it beautiful? Is it true? Is it noble?

CHAPTER I.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD POEM?

We may consider literature under three heads—Pure Poetry, the Prose Essay, and Fiction.

Poetry is unquestionably the oldest form of literature. Matthew Arnold once queried whether a people ought not to be barbarous to be really poetic. Perhaps it originated in the chant of the priests as they offered sacrifices to their gods; but the chanted tale recounting the deeds of glorious war must have come very soon after.

Mechanically, poetry consists in words arranged in measured feet and lines, corresponding almost exactly to the time element in music. Rhyme is a modern invention and in no way essential to poetry. Originally anything that could be chanted or sung was regarded as poetry. Now the song element has largely disappeared, but the requirement of measured feet and lines remains, and we may almost say that no poetry can be fully appreciated till it is read aloud.

Poetry was invented to express lofty sentiments,

sentiments of religion and the noble sentiments of patriotism and brave deeds, and finally the sentiments of passionate love. It is still the loftiest form of literature, and if we would seize at a grasp all the length and breadth of the highest literary art, we should begin with the study of poetry.

True literature should express equally Truth, Nobility, and Beauty, the intellectual, the ethical, and the esthetic. Of course one poem will be pre-eminent for its beauty, another for its nobility, a third for its truth. Let us examine various types, that we may see with our own eyes and feel with our own hearts what these words mean.

Read aloud this lullaby from Tennyson's *Princess*:

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
 Wind of the western sea,
 Low, low, breathe and blow,
 Wind of the western sea!
 Over the rolling waters go,
 Come from the dying moon, and blow,
 Blow him again to me;
 While my little one, while my pretty one,
 sleeps.
 Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
 Father will come to thee soon;
 Father will come to his babe in the nest.
 Silver sails all out of the west
 Under the silver moon;
 Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
 sleep.

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The first thing we notice, besides the pleasing rhythm, is the musical quality of the words. There can be no melody, as melody is known in music, but in the repetition of sounds and their enchanting variations we find something that very strongly suggests musical melody.

Then we are attracted by the beauty of the images. The words come tripping like fairy forms, and we feel a picture growing out of the *camera obscura* of our minds.

The appeal is almost wholly to our feelings; for if we stop to analyse the words and interpret their strict sense, we seem to see nothing but nonsense. The poem exists for the soothing, enchanting, dreamy beauty that seems rather to breathe in the words than to be expressed by them as words express thoughts in prose.

If there is any truth or any nobility in this poem of Tennyson's, it would be hard to say just what they are. There is nothing ignoble; there is nothing untrue. But it seems as if we had a perfect type of beauty pure and simple.

Now let us read this little thing from Shelley:

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine

In one another's being mingle;—
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven,
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

Once more we observe the rhythm and the music, though not so perfect or real as in Tennyson's song; and we see the beauty of images, almost as beautiful as the images in Sweet and Low; but we observe that there is a new element: a thought is expressed. Beauty has come to the aid of truth; and while we are uncertain whether we care most for the beauty or for the truth, we cannot but perceive how they aid each other.

But we have not yet found the moral or ethical element. Neither Tennyson nor Shelley inspires in us nobler sentiments, or gives us courage to do and dare loftier deeds.

For the purely ethical type we might turn to the psalms of David, or that noble poem Job. But we find the same element in a simple and modern form in a poem of Longfellow's.

HOW AND WHAT TO READ A PSALM OF LIFE.

WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN
SAID TO THE PSALMIST.

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
"Life is but an empty dream!"
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real, life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present,
Heart within and God o'er head,

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

Once more we observe how the musical flow of the language charms our ear, and how the poem makes us *feel* that which it would teach. We miss the vibrating melody of words which we found in Tennyson and even in Shelley; and the rarely beautiful images of both the preceding poems are almost entirely absent. There is another element, however, which we could not perceive at all in those verses, and that is the element of nobility, of moral inspiration. The poem does not teach us any moral truth with which we were before unfamiliar, as a treatise on philosophy might; but it makes us *feel* as nothing else ever has the reality of that which we know already. It actually breathes courage into us,—not the courage for heroic deeds in battle, but the heroism of living nobly the common life that is ours.

It is not fair to condemn this almost perfect poem, as some critics do, because it is lacking in the Beauty and fresh Truth that make the poems of

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other poets immortal; for in the whole range of poetic literature it will be difficult to find a more perfect example of nobility and heroic courage.

It will be interesting now to turn to Browning's *Rabbi Ben Esra* and find the philosophy, the Truth that corresponds to this Nobility.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff

That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joy three parts pain!

Strive, and hold cheap the strain;

Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
the throe!

VII.

For thence,—a paradox

Which comforts while it mocks,—

Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be,

And was not, comforts me:

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i'
the scale.

* * * * *

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass

Called "work," must sentence pass,

Things done that took the eye and had the price;

O'er which, from level stand,

The low world laid its hand,

Found straightway to its mind, could value in a
trice:

XXIV.

But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the
man's amount:

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the
pitcher shaped.

The subject is almost precisely that of Longfellow's Psalm of Life, but the object is not so much to give us courage as to confirm our courage by philosophy. The appeal is intellectual, not ethical.

Yet this is very different from a treatise by Kant or Hegel. Browning the poet makes us *feel* the truth. It is emotion that his philosophy, his Truth, arouses in us—an intellectual emotion, but none the less an emotion. We find the measured rhythm of poetry, but it is as far as possible from the songlike music of Tennyson's lullaby. The mechanical limits and restrictions seem an excuse for unusual and almost strained images, but images that nevertheless

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carry conviction to our minds. There is, too, a beauty in the conception. This poetry is philosophy, but impassioned and inspired philosophy.

Let us now read a poem still more lofty, a poem in which rare beauty, lofty nobility, and profound philosophy are mingled in almost equal proportions. I refer to Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*:

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even unto my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration. * * *

* * * that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. * * *

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

The sweet melody of Tennyson's lullaby has here given away to a deep, organ-like harmony, that swells and reverberates, while the words seem to be making the simplest and most direct of statements. Image and plain statement so mingle that we cannot distinguish them, Truth suddenly seems radiant with a rare and angelic Beauty, and the very atmosphere breathes the loftiness of Noble Purity. Unexpectedly almost we find ourselves in the presence of Divinity itself, and the humblest meets the loftiest on common ground.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD ESSAY?

Prose has a bad name. We think of it and speak of it as including everything in language that is *not* poetry. In former times art in literature meant poetry,—or, at a stretch, it included in addition only oratory.

The beginning of art in the use of *unmeasured* language (if we may use that term to designate language that does not have the metrical form) was undoubtedly oratory,—the impassioned appeal of a speaker to his fellow men. The language was rhythmical, but not measured, that is, not suscep-

tible of division into lines, corresponding to bars of music; and the element of beauty was distinctly subordinate to the elements of nobility and truth. In modern times poetry has come to be more and more the mere aggregation of images of beauty, without much reference to the intellectual, and still less to the ethical; and prose has been the recognized medium for the intellectual and the moral.

Of course, modern times have not given us any oratory superior to that of Demosthenes and Cicero; nor any plain statement of historical fact superior to that of Herodotus, Thucydides, or Tacitus. But art in conversational prose, reduced to writing and made literature, may fairly be said to date from the essayists of Queen Anne's time—Addison, Swift, Goldsmith, and their fellows; and it was brought to perfection by Lamb, De Quincey, Macaulay, Thackeray, Irving, and others of their day.

In most of this prose we find a new element—humour. The original, characteristic, typical essay is whimsical, sympathetic, kindly, amusing, suggestive, and close to reality. The impassioned appeal of oratory has been adapted to the requirements of reading prose by such writers as De Quincey and Macaulay; but the humorous essay has been by far the more popular.

And what is humour? It would be hard to say that it is either beauty, nobility, or truth. The fact is poetry, with its lofty atmosphere, rarefied, artificial, and emotional, is in danger of becoming morbid, unhealthy, and impractical. Humour is the sanitary sea salt that purifies and saves. No one

with a sense of humour can get very far away from elemental and obvious facts. Humour is the corrective, the freshener, the health-giver. Its danger is the trivial, the commonplace, and the inconsequent.

The primary object of prose is to represent the truth, but in so far as prose is true literature, it must make its appeal to the emotions. The humorous essay must make us feel healthier and more sprightly, the impassioned oratorical picture must fire us with desires and inspire us with courage of a practical and specific kind. Mere logical demonstration, or argumentative appeal, are not in themselves literature because their appeal is not emotional, and so not a part of the vibrating electric fluid of humanity; and beauty plays the subordinate part of furnishing suggestive and illustrative images for the illumination of what is called "the style."

Gradually prose has absorbed all the powers and useful qualities of poetry not inconsistent with its practical and unartificial character. So the characteristics of a good prose style are in many respects not unlike the characteristics of a good poetic style.

First, good prose should be rhythmical and musical, though never measured. As prose is never to be sung, the artificial characteristics of music should never be present in any degree; but as poetry in its more highly developed forms has lost its qualities of simple melody and attained characteristics of a more beautiful harmony, so prose, starting with mere absence of roughness and harshness of sound, gradually has attained to something very near akin to the musical harmony of the more refined poetry.

Almost the only difference lies in the presence or absence of measure; but this forms a clear dividing line between poetry (reaching down from above) and prose (rising up from below).

Second, the more suggestive prose is, the better it is. It is true that images should not be used merely for their own sake, as they may be in poetry; but their possibilities in the way of illustration and illumination are infinite, and it is this office that they perform in the highest forms of poetry. To paraphrase Browning, it enables the genius to express "thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow" word. And so that whole side of life that cannot possibly be expressed in the definite formulæ of science finds its body and incarnation in literature.

Third, good prose will never be very far from easily perceived facts and realities of life. The saving salt of humour will prevent wandering very far; and this same humour will make reading easier, and will induce that relaxation of labour-strained faculties which alone permits the exercise and enjoyment of our higher powers. We shall never get into heaven if we are forever working, and humour causes us to cease work and lie free and open for the inspiration from above.

It would be hard to find either nobility, truth, or beauty as distinguishing characteristics in the following letter of Charles Lamb's; but it is certain that it is admirable prose. If it does not give us that which we seek, it most certainly puts us into the mood in which we are most likely to find it in other and loftier writers:

"March 9, 1822.

"Dear Coleridge—It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well: they are interesting creatures at a certain age. What a pity that such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling and brain sauce. Did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly, with no Œdipean avulsion? Was the crackling the colour of ripe pomegranate? Had you no complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire. Did you flesh maiden teeth in it?

"Not that I sent the pig, or can form the remotest guess what part Owen could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in his life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig after all was meant for me; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away. Teal, widgeons, snipes, barn-door fowls, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled; your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self-extended; but pardon me if I stop somewhere. Where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest

to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs of remorse I ever felt was when a child—when my kind old aunt had strained her pocket-strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabouts; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner; and in the coxcombry of taught charity, I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me; the sum it was to her; the pleasure that she had a right to expect that I—not the old impostor—should take in eating her cake—the ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like; and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and it proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to the dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper.

“But when Providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

“Yours (short of pig) to command in everything,
C. L.”

When we have finished reading this, we wonder if we have not mistaken our standards of life; if

the senses are not as truly divine as our dreams, and certainly far more within the reach of our realization. We think, we feel happy, we are certainly no worse. Whatever strange thing this humour may have done to us, we are more truly *men* for having experienced it.

And it is this that prose can do that poetry, even of the best, can never accomplish.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD NOVEL?

From the beginning of literature the most interesting thing which a writer can write has been the life history of a MAN. We are like boats borne on the swift current of the rushing river of Time. Whether our boat sink or swim, or turn to the right or to the left, is the matter of intensest interest—indeed, our interest is usually so intense in this subject that we can think of nothing else with any zest. And as we study our own problem of navigation on the waters of life, we watch all our neighbours to see how they succeed or fail, and why. Their problem is our problem and ours is theirs. Hence it is that stories of human life have formed the substance of the world's greatest literature since the days of Homer.

Before outlining the history of the literary form which the universal human story has taken, let us explain the meaning of "the dramatic." Drama

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deals with the crises in individual lives. While our boats on the current of Time sail smoothly and straight on their way, there is no drama, nothing that can be called dramatic, and so no material for an interesting story; but the moment that any obstacle or force of any kind, exterior or interior, causes the steady onward course of the life to cease or turn aside, however little, that moment we have the dramatic. So for the elements of a drama we must have a *collision* of life forces, one of which forces is the onward movement of some individual human life. The other force may be circumstances, or "Fate," as we call it; or it may be another human life. When but two forces meet, we have the simplest form of the drama, such as we may see in any short story or a one-act play. In a novel or a drama in acts we shall find a collision of several and various forces, usually different human lives meeting and influencing each other.

While the human story has been the same, and the principles of dramatic construction have been but little changed in several thousand years, the artistic form has changed with changing conditions, and the history of its development is intensely interesting.

The first form in which the story of life was told was the epic poem, as for example Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* was the tale of the "wrath of Achilles, Peleus's son." That force, coming straight athwart the current of the warlike lives of all the Greek and Trojan heroes, could not but be

dramatic, for there was not one of them whose onward movement was not changed in some way, and of course the changes were interesting in proportion to the importance of the lives of the subjects—the greater the subject the greater the drama (if adequately executed) in the world's literary history.

The next form which the human story took was that of the stage drama. Mechanical necessity required that the collision and life changes should be represented in the speeches of the characters, as in the epic poem they had been narrated in the song of the minstrel. We have our finest examples of the stage drama in Shakespeare, and we find that the poetic language uttered by the various characters on the stage is not very different from the language uttered by the single minstrel when he was the only performer. Moreover, we find a new element which the minstrel could not very easily represent, and that is humour. In the humorous portions the poetic drama begins to be prose.

The discovery of the printing press, which makes books that every man may read in his closet, has given birth to the third form of the great human story—the novel.

While there can be no doubt that the novel is the form above all others in which the world today chooses to receive the human story, the epic poem no longer being written and the poetic drama but rarely, still we should make a mistake if we suppose that the novel is the direct child and heir of the poetic stage drama even to the same extent that the drama was the direct child and heir of epic poetry.

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Both the epic poem and the poetic drama have a dignity and loftiness that much more adequately represent the nobler and loftier characteristics of the human personality than the often trivial and even base and ignoble fictitious tale in the novel. The truth is, the modern novel is directly descended from the tavern tale, the amusing and entertaining narrative of the chance traveller coming unpretentiously and unexpectedly into the quiet country village. Such tavern tales we find in their purest form in the *Arabian Nights* and in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The stories of Sindbad the Sailor and the lovers of Boccaccio had unquestionably been told again and again by the wayfarer eager for the applause of his little audience, and had again and again been listened to by common folk whose only glimpse of the life of the outer world came through these same tavern yarns. Boccaccio collected his stories from the taverns of Italy, and wrote them out in the choicest Italian for the entertainment of his king and queen (A. D. 1348). The stories of the *Arabian Nights* were collected in Egypt at about the same time by some person or persons unknown, and reached the European world through the French version of Galland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the *Arabian Nights* we may find the origin of the modern romance, and in the *Decameron* the beginning of the modern love-story or novel.

The bond of union between the tavern tale and the story of modern fiction is not difficult to detect. The tavern tale is the confidential narrative of the

unpretentious traveller to his handful of uncritical common people whose instincts are primitive and whose primary desire is for amusement: the story of modern fiction is the confidential narrative of the author to a single ordinary or average reader, who sits down in the privacy of his closet to be amused and instructed—chiefly amused. The style required in both cases is personal, familiar, and conversational. Formality is thrown aside, and unrestrained by any critical audience or the presence of a judge of mature mind and high appreciation, both tale-teller and story-writer speak freely of the privacy of life, and of its most sacred secrets as well as its most hidden vices. Such a medium is very far from the lofty dignity of poetry; yet it is perhaps the only truly democratic form of literary art.

As we have seen, the modern novel was at first nothing more than an almost verbatim report of the tavern tale-teller's narrative. Then, in Richardson and Fie'ding, we find the same kind of gossip invented by the author and set forth with a trifle more fancy and imagination, as it is done in letters. The powers of the prose essay invented by Addison and his fellows were soon added to the style of the novel, an early illustration of which we may find in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. Scott gave the novel the dignity and romantic interest of history—history made human and therefore turned into true literature. Dickens added the sentimental, poetic style of the ballad, and Thackeray the teaching of

the familiar homily.* In the stories of Hawthorne we see what the ancient fable and allegory contributed to the modern fictitious phantasy.

In Balzac for the first time we discover any attempt to make fiction the vehicle for the broad national drama which Homer gave us in his epic poems. In Poe we find the beginnings of an application of dramatic principles to the construction of the short story, and in this very small field Maupassant brought the art of dramatic construction well nigh to perfection. We may imagine that a novel ought to be as complete and perfectly constructed a drama as one of Shakespeare's plays; but the fact that we find no such novels suggests that fiction as an art is yet incomplete and not fully matured.

The origin of fiction was very low; but it was an origin very near to the common people, and so to the simple and natural instincts of all of us. With this broad foundation the possibilities of development are enormous, and we may reasonably hope that some day the novel will take a place in literary art that is much above that of the epic poem or even the poetic drama. It is not hampered by the mechanical limitations of either of these, and the variety and literary opportunity which characterize it are the possession of fiction alone.

And now let us ask, What are the characteristics of a good novel? And, How may we judge a novel?

*We should not overlook the important part the pulpit has had in the development of English literature.

We may think of the novel in two ways—as the tavern tale and as poetry—as prose, with its characteristic humour and conversational style, and the imaginative and lofty dream of the human soul, otherwise expressible only in verse.

As a tavern tale we may test a novel by fancying that the author is sitting down in person with us in our dressing-gown before the fire. He talks to us and tells us a tale. If he were there in person, what characteristics should he have to make him attractive to us? Why, of course, he should be polite and engaging. Too great familiarity even in the privacy of home spoils friendship, and so does vulgarity. And yet with a certain reserve of manner he may enter upon almost any topic of human thought, and even discuss with us our own secret sins. The good conversationalist will make us think and talk ourselves, and so will a good novel-writer. Of course we cannot talk to the author; but we can find in our friends a good substitute for him.

Another quality we shall demand is sincerity. While we may like to listen for a time to the brilliant conversation of a witty talker whom we cannot trust, the sincere friend will hold our affections long after the brilliant talker is forgotten. The brilliant and insincere friend and the brilliant and insincere novelist or writer are alike left deserted in their old age, with not a friend in the world. (What better example of this could we have than Oscar Wilde? When the insincerity of his character was found out, how quickly the world dropped him!)

The novelist above all other writers stands to the reader in the attitude of a personal friend. At first we turn to such a friend merely because he is agreeable as a companion; but the time comes when we wish to consult him as to the solution of our personal difficulties, and ask him to share in our personal joys. In somewhat the same way a novel writer may become the friend and adviser of his reader. In the stories he tells he deals frankly and sincerely with just such problems of life and emotion as those which confront the reader; and through his characters he declares what he thinks the best thing to do. If you would test the greatness of any novelist, ask the question, Would you be willing to follow the advice which he gives his characters?

We have spoken of the author as the friend of the reader. This figure of speech has been chosen for the purpose of making apparent the intimate relations between the substance of the story and the personality of the reader. As a matter of fact, however, it is only the personality of the *reader* which is in any way alive and consciously perceived: the writer is so entirely impersonal (or should be) that he becomes completely merged in his characters. His spirit is felt in every line of description and every touch of character; but, as we might say, his own form should never be seen. With no suggestion of sacrilege we might even say that he is to the creations in the novel what God is to nature: the eye sees nature in all its beauty, but only the heart can perceive by a hidden vision

of its own the presence of the divine. Such is the ideal part which an artist should play in his story.

But, though the artist as a personality is or should be entirely unseen, he is only the more truly present; and the greater his soul and the nobler his life and the broader his imagination and the more poetic his fancy, the more truly does his book become a treasure to the reader.

All dramatic writers, whether epic poets, poetic dramatists, or novelists, are known by the characters they create. It is not important that those characters should ever have really existed in the world: what is demanded is that they be natural and possible and true to the principles of life. The creative writer will of course create characters never seen before. He will never be a mere copyist; or if he is he becomes a biographer, and ceases to be a dramatic artist. Of course, also, these characters must have their collisions with other characters or with the forces of fate. That is necessary to give dramatic interest, the interest of plot. And characters are known by what they do; so unless they really meet adequate dramatic situations they cannot be said to exist at all, even though the author has described them minutely and told us that they have an endless variety of noble and beautiful qualities: for us only those qualities exist which we see in action. So in brief we may say that a great novelist (or other dramatic writer) is known by the great deeds of his great characters.

From this point of view Shakspeare is our greatest author. His Lear, Othello, Desdemona,

Portia, Macbeth, Hamlet, Caesar, Brutus, Cleopatra, and the rest form a noble company of great men and women. Instinctively we compare these fictitious characters with the characters of history. Many of them are taken from history; but by art and imagination they are created anew in shapes that live before our eyes as the characters of history (often quite different personages) really lived before the eyes of their contemporaries, but could not live before our eyes.

No novelist gives us such a company of *great* men and women—very few give us even one great man. In some ways we may compare with Shakspeare's characters those of Balzac. The great French novelist set out to represent typical characters of all classes of the society he knew. He has as varied a company as Shakspeare, and it is typical of society as Shakspeare's is not; but none of Balzac's characters can for a moment be considered as great as Shakspeare's. Even the Country Doctor, perhaps Balzac's noblest creation, has no such depth of interest as Hamlet, for example, though we might possibly compare him with Prospero; and what a creature is the Duchesse de Langeais beside Portia!

But a novelist who gives us no characters which we can take an interest in even if we do not love them or admire them is not much of a novelist. The name of Thackeray suggests Becky Sharpe and Henry Esmond and Colonel Newcome. The fine substance of Thackeray's men and women, both good and bad, their refinement and delicacy and intelligence and sensibility, mark them as personalities

far above the ordinary in fiction; and so they give Thackeray a rank that the variety of his characters and the range of his sympathies would not otherwise entitle him to. Dickens is to us but a name for the little dream world in which we make the acquaintance of David Copperfield and Micawber and Peggotty and Agnes and Dora, of the father of the Marshalsea and Little Dorrit and their friends of the prison, of Little Nell and her friends, of Oliver Twist and his thievish but interesting companions. Dickens's characters are not examples for admiration; but they are intensely interesting because so intensely human, coming so near to us ourselves as they often do even when we are least ready to admit it. And unquestionably their number is great. The number and variety of an author's characters are always to be taken into account in estimating his greatness, or even his value to us individually.

Scott's characters are very different from any of these. They seem made especially to wear picturesque historic' costumes, and in their almost limitless multitude they form a pageantry which is splendid and entrancing in the extreme. The thing of value is that the pageantry is alive; and if Scott's characters were created to wear costumes, they were created living all of them; and (as the reader of *Sartor Resartus* well knows) the wearing of costumes is, in its figurative sense, one of the most important duties of life, with many people becoming nearly a religion. In Scott we may find out to what extent this universal passion is legitimate and

what great-souled love there may be in the heart beating beneath the costume.

Such are some of the principles by which we should test and judge all works of dramatic art, whether plays on the stage or novels. We need not, however, in all cases wholly condemn a book professing to be a novel which falls short by this criterion: it may be good as an essay or a history or a treatise, and its author may have mistaken its character in calling it a novel.

CHAPTER IV.

LANDMARKS IN MODERN LITERATURE.

Most people read in such a desultory way that they never know whether they are really familiar with standard literature or not. All the books of one author are read because they are liked; and none of the books of another are known because the reader never managed to get interested, or never happened to have his or her attention called to that author's books. A very simple working system is needed, with landmarks, as it were, set up here and there to guide the choice of books at all times and make it intelligent and just.

SHAKSPERE—1600.

English literature practically begins with Shakspeare, who did his best work about 1600 A. D., three hundred years ago. Two important poets come before him—Spenser, who was still living when he began to be known as a successful dramatist, and

Chaucer, who was a contemporary of Boccaccio and the first noteworthy writer in the then new English tongue, that tongue in which Norman-French had mingled with Anglo-Saxon in the common patois of the people, though pure French and Latin remained the languages of the court and of scholarship.

The language in which Chaucer wrote is now so antiquated that it is not easy for the ordinary person to read it. His "Canterbury Tales" are pleasant and cheerful, for he was an eminently sane man; but what he wrote has been often rewritten since his time till we are quite familiar with most of his stories and ideas through other channels.

Spenser, whose best work is the *Faerie Queen*, though he wrote so near the time of Shakspeare, seems decidedly more antiquated; yet, as compared with Chaucer, he is easy reading. The *Faerie Queen* is one long series of beautiful and sensuous images, a mingling of fair women, brave knights, and ugly dragons which in his hands attain a dreamy charm. Says Taine, "He was pre-eminently a creator and a dreamer, and that most naturally, instinctively, and unceasingly. We might go on forever describing this inward condition of all great artists * * *

A character appears to them, then an action, then a landscape, then a succession of actions, characters, landscapes, producing, completing, arranging themselves before our eyes. This fount of living and changing forms is inexhaustible in Spenser. He has but to close his eyes and apparitions arise; they abound in him, crowd, overflow; in vain he

pours them forth; they continually float up, more copious and more dense." And we may add that the language in which he describes these dreams is as musical as the fancy of his imagery is rich. If one likes that sort of thing one can soon learn to read Spenser with ease and enjoyment, and in the whole range of English literature we shall find nothing so sensuously sweet as his poetry, in his own musical "Spenserian" stanza.

As we have said, for the ordinary reader English literature begins with Shakspeare. He was the central figure of the brilliant era of Queen Elizabeth; but none of his fellow dramatists, not even "rare Ben Jonson" or Marlowe, are read today. For us they are dead, and Shakspeare alone remains as the representative of the "Golden Age," though perhaps we must include in it Bacon and Milton, writers who stand somewhat apart.

ROBINSON CRUSOE—1719.

The next principal epoch is just one hundred years later, when the reign of Queen Anne was adorned by the essayists, headed by Addison; by the "classic" poets, foremost among whom are Dryden and Pope; and by the first of the novel-writers, Defoe, the author of Robinson Crusoe. Here we find three different kinds of authors equally eminent. This "age" continued for seventy-five years,—indeed, we may say a hundred, expiring on the appearance of the poets Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. It is called the "Classic Age," because the leading writers, especially the poets (Dryden, Pope, etc.), tried to follow the classic models of

Greece and Rome, and so produced work most highly polished and theoretically correct; but of course it was artificial and wanting in the instinctive and spontaneous elements of poetry as we know it in the nineteenth century poets. The term "classic," however, does not apply to the novelists—Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, and Goldsmith following Defoe and Bunyan. These novel writers were looked on as too low for critical attention; but the prose of Addison, Steel, Swift Johnson, and Goldsmith* was admired as prose had never been admired before, and our later age has accepted this prose as the greatest literary achievement of the eighteenth century.

The modern reader will find his chief interest in the literature of the nineteenth century. And now there are a few dates that we should remember.

BURNS—1786.

Burns prepared the way for the new poetry—a poetry simple, spontaneous, tender, and true, as the poetry of Pope was artificial, clever, and "elegant." The Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems appeared in 1786. It was a country print of the immortal work of a rude country poet.

LYRICAL BALLADS—1798.

The "romantic movement" in poetry, as it was called, was really inaugurated in 1798—a date always to be remembered—by the little volume of *Lyrical Ballads* published jointly by Wordsworth

*Goldsmith is a sort of link between the essayist and the novelist. He was almost equally eminent as novelist, essayist, and poet.

and Coleridge. This volume contained "The Rime of the Ancient Marinere" (Coleridge's best poem) and "Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey" (the best work of Wordsworth). No one paid much attention to the book, and but a limited number of copies were sold or given away. A few poets, however, read it and felt its spirit.

The first of these to take up the new poetic movement was Scott, in his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which at once became popular. For ten years Scott was the popular poet, but then he was succeeded by Byron, the poet of the dark and cynical. Close on the heels of Byron came Shelley and Keats. Last of all came Tennyson and Browning. Tennyson's reputation was made by his two volumes of poems published in 1842; and Browning published some of his best work in the same year, though his fame did not come to him till many years later.

LAMB—1825.

So much for poetry. The prose essay lay dormant from the time of Goldsmith until Charles Lamb and De Quincey appeared. Lamb's *Essays of Elia* began in the *London Magazine* in 1825; and that is a good date to remember as the beginning of the revival of the essay. At almost the same time we have De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, with brilliant, impassioned prose; and during the next twenty-five years came Macaulay, the writer of oratorical prose, the splendid rhetorician and rhetorical painter of word pictures, and Carlyle, the apostle of work, the philosopher, the lecturer through the printed page, and last of all,

Matthew Arnold and Ruskin, both critics—Ruskin by far the more brilliant and varied.

WAVERLEY—1814.

In the novel the first great date to remember in the nineteenth century is 1814—the year of the publication of *Waverley*. Between the *Vicar of Wakefield* and *Waverley* no great work of fiction appeared, though Jane Austen was writing her artistic little stories. But when *Waverley* was published every one felt that a new era was at hand. The book at once became immensely popular. It did for the novel what the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* had done for poetry—it introduced the romantic era in fiction.

HUGO, DUMAS, BALZAC—1830.

Scott held the field almost entirely to himself until 1830. In that year Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas, and Balzac, all three acknowledging the genius and power of Scott, appeared in France. Hugo and Dumas were professed romanticists; but Balzac was a realist, and advocated ideas that were not generally accepted by the critics till many years later, though the common people bought his books freely.

It was Dickens who really made the realistic novel popular. The date to remember is 1835, the year in which *Sketches by Boz* appeared and *Pickwick* was begun. *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray's first masterpiece, was published in 1848, and in 1858 George Eliot's *Adam Bede*.

Since 1860 the forward movement in English literature seems to have stopped, and such writers as

George Meredith and Thomas Hardy appear rather as belated members of the older group than representatives of any new type. With these we must include Tolstoi, Turgenev, and Ibsen.

In Stevenson, Kipling, and Barrie we undoubtedly have the beginning of a new literary movement, the importance of which it is impossible yet to estimate.

AMERICAN LITERATURE.

We have purposely omitted mention of the American authors, since they do not seem to fit into the movement of literary ideas in England. They are more simply and obviously artists, giving to the people what they can that they think the people will like, and each in his own way.

IRVING—1820.

Our first writer of importance was Irving, whose *Sketchbook* was published in 1820. Irving has been called the "American Addison." He might almost as well be called the American Lamb, though Lamb's essays did not begin to appear till five years later; and he was more of a story-teller than Lamb.

James Fenimore Cooper began his literary career as a professed imitator of Scott in 1820; but he soon developed a purely American romantic novel, the novel of the Indian. He is no very great novelist; but his books are still popular.

The first American poet was William Cullen Bryant, whose best poem, *Thanatopsis*, was written when he was eighteen, in 1812.

Between 1830 and 1840 appeared some of the best work of Poe, Longfellow, and Emerson; but they

were as utterly distinct in their spirit and purposes as if they had belonged to different ages. Poe was the poetic inventor, the discoverer of the dramatic principles of plot in story-writing, and the original literary critic; Longfellow was the sweet singer of the people, the home poet, unoriginal but beloved by all; Emerson was the philosopher and man of letters combined, the serious essay writer and interpreter to the people of the new discoveries of the great students of philosophy.

Following Longfellow were the poets Lowell, Whittier, and Holmes, all of whose best work just preceded or just followed the Civil War.

SCARLET LETTER—1851.

The one great American novelist is Hawthorne, whose *Scarlet Letter* appeared in 1851—his first great novel—and whose best work was all completed prior to 1861, the year of his return from his consulship at Liverpool.

Many of our political leaders have been great writers, too. The first was Benjamin Franklin, whose *Poor Richard's Almanac* and *Autobiography* must certainly be included among the great works of American letters. Then Daniel Webster, who stands among the first of great orators in the English language, was the author (between 1830 and 1860) of a series of speeches, many of which have been accepted as an important part of our literature. And among short masterpieces there is none greater than the Gettysburg speech of Abraham Lincoln, though it would not be proper to speak of him as a man of letters.

It will be seen that practically all of our great American literature appeared between the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Since the Civil War there has been a new era; but it is not our present purpose to estimate current writers.

SUMMARY.

To summarize the whole field, English and American, we may say that the literature that we call standard began with Shakspeare, three hundred years ago. The first work in that period was Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, the second Shakspeare's plays. Chaucer, who wrote two hundred years earlier, we may look on as the forerunner, who prepared the way for the epoch which opened so brilliantly with Spenser and Shakspeare. Passing over the names of Bacon and Milton, who belong to the seventeenth century, but stand apart from the literary movement or merely suggested what was to come long after, we find the Queen Anne essayists as the characteristic literary workers at the beginning of the eighteenth century; and on either side of them the poets of the Classic Age, of whom Pope was high priest, and the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, the despised teller of tales who was to be the forerunner of a literary movement greater than any we have yet seen. The Classic Age ended with Goldsmith, and the Romantic movement, first perceived in Burns, really took definite form as a movement in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. Scott was the popularizer of the Romantic movement in both verse and prose. That movement reached its climax in 1830 in Hugo and Dumas. In that year Balzac in-

augurated the realistic movement, whose forerunner was Jane Austen; but it is Dickens who, beginning in 1835, really made it as popular as Scott had made the Romantic movement by the Waverley novels. And while the Romantic movement was aristocratic, the Realistic movement, going back to the despised Robinson Crusoe, was highly democratic.

In Tennyson we find a poet who made the romantic thought into works of art that the people could appreciate; and in Longfellow we see much the same thing done for the realistic poetry, though Walt Whitman, a very imperfect artist, is the high priest of the democratic idea in poetry.

If we can only fix these dates and periods and dominant eras of thought in our minds, we shall have a framework in which we can fit all the varying phases of modern English literature.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEST POETRY AND HOW TO READ IT.

The reading and enjoyment of poetry may be said to be a fine art. Certainly no one is likely to have a taste for poetry who does not cultivate it. Yet nothing is so characteristic of the person of culture, and nothing is so likely to produce true culture, as the reading and study of the best poetry.

It is probably a fact that of all the volumes of

poetry in the world, not one in a hundred is read. It would be almost impossible to read through from beginning to end the complete works of any well known poet, and nothing could be more foolish than to attempt to do so. Yet the average owner of a volume of poetry cannot think of anything else to do with it except let it alone, and generally chooses the latter alternative.

A poem is not like a story. One reads a story, enjoys it, and lays it aside. Few would care to read even the best novel more than once, or at most two or three times at widely separated intervals. A poem, on the other hand, cannot be understood or truly enjoyed even by the most cultivated until it has been read several times. In fact one reads a poem for quite a different purpose from that which leads one to read a story. A poem is more like a piece of music: one reads it when one wishes to be put into the mood which the poem or the music is intended to produce. The favourite mood produces happiness, and when we wish that kind of happiness we turn to the work of art which is able to produce it in us.

Now evidently it is not every poet whose moods are like our own. It is true that we may wish to cultivate moods not natural to us; but there is a distinct limit even to these. It follows, therefore, that there are not many poets we will wish to study, or even to read more than once; and there are but few poems even of the poets we like which will have that perfect effect on us which will make us wish to repeat it often.

If one were asked to suggest the surest way to acquire a liking for poetry and a knowledge of it, the following would probably be the method suggested:

First, find one good poem that one could really like and read more than once with pleasure. There are few of us who could not name such a poem at once; but many of us go no farther.

Having chosen the first poem, one has thereby made choice of the first poet, a poet whose moods are in accord with one's own and whom one is likely to be able to learn to like. Unless we can start with a liking, and proceed to another liking, we are not likely to go very far.

While one likes a poet rather than poems, when one's taste is fully trained, the most successful readers of poetry know a poet by relatively few poems. One cannot read many poems many times, and as we cannot appreciate any poetry fully that we do not read many times, we must make a selection. Indeed we shall find that there are but few poems of any poet that produce in us the desired mood. For us, all the other poems are more or less failures, at least more or less imperfect. So the first principle in the successful reading of poetry is to select most rigidly.

While the special student of poetry may read the entire work of a poet, weigh each poem, and select judiciously those which he will reread and finally make a part of his inner circle of friends, the general reader must depend upon the selection of some one else to some extent, or at least he will

read first those recommended to him, afterward dipping casually into others in the hope that he will find one he will wish to study more carefully. Such a selection, and one of the best ever made, is Matthew Arnold's selection from the poems of Wordsworth. But even Matthew Arnold does not tell you what poem of Wordsworth's to begin with. Another admirable selection of the "best poems" is Palgrave's "Golden Treasury." Yet even in that most lovers of poetry will miss many that have been excluded because they are not lyric, or because they are too long, or for some other reason which is not an essential one with the reader. Other selectors of poems have not been so fortunate, and when one can have a tolerably complete edition of a poet in his library, he will wish to make his own selection with the aid of such adviser as he may choose.

One of the easiest poets to begin with is Longfellow. We have already read the Psalm of Life. Let us read it again, and yet again.

Longfellow very aptly describes himself as a poet in that beautiful song of his "The Day is Done."

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall sooth that restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavour;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As rain from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start.

Who, through long days of labour,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

And there is no better way to enjoy poetry than
to read it aloud:

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

Turning over the leaves of your volume of Longfellow, mark these few poems to read first, and if you find one that you like, read it again. Perhaps you will be quite familiar with some, if not most in this list; but if there are some that you do not know, but that attract you on reading once, study those till you have learned to love them; in so doing you will have made a real beginning toward the culture that comes from a systematic study of poetry: "A Psalm of Life," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "Footsteps of Angels," "Flowers," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Skeleton in Armour," "The Village Blacksmith," "The Rainy Day," "God's Acre," "To the River Charles," "Maidenhood," "Excelsior," "The Belfry at Bruges," "The Arsenal at Springfield," "The Norman Baron," "The Bridge," "Curfew," "The Building of the Ship," "The Builders," "Pegasus in Pound," "Beware," "The Day is Done," "The Old Clock on the Stairs," "The Arrow and the Song," "My Lost Youth," "Paul Revere's Ride" (Tales of a Wayside Inn), "The Birds of Killingworth," "The Bell of Atri," "The Children's Hour," "Hanging of the Crane," and "Keramos." These are not all the good poems, and some of these are not even the best; but they are a good list to choose from. Besides these you will perhaps like to read "Hiawatha" first, then "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and finally "Evangeline"; but these longer poems are tales rather than poems, and one does not care to return to them as to the shorter gems.

Longfellow is a "humbler poet," as he himself has

expressed it, but he is none the less a poet; and in all literature you will not find a simpler poet, nor one easier to read and like.

Next to Longfellow, perhaps the most generally liked modern poet is Tennyson. Tennyson was not a great thinker, like Browning; he was rather the interpreter of the thinker poets, for the reader who could not read Wordsworth and the rest for himself. Tennyson set out in early life to master poetic technique, and he could write more different styles than any other great modern poet. Besides, his poems often have a swing (quite unlike the sweet melody of Longfellow's) which fascinates many. And he was peculiarly and distinctly the poet of moods. "Break, Break, Break" is little more than a haunting melody in words; and the same may be said of most of the songs in "The Princess," beautiful as they are.

It will take much more time to learn to like Tennyson than it required for Longfellow, for Tennyson is so various, and we must come at him in so many different ways.

Perhaps we might begin with such mere pretty rhythms as "Airy, Fairy Lilian" and "Claribel"; how much better than these shall we find "The Lady of Shallott," "Break, Break, Break," and all the songs in "The Princess." "The Princess" itself is rather a tedious poem, certainly one which we would not care to read twice in succession; but the songs scattered through it are as nearly perfect as that sort of poetry well could be. "The May Queen" is a pretty and fascinating simple story that may touch us more deeply than we would own; and a

poem of a different kind which might appeal particularly to our mood is "Locksley Hall," following it with "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," which we may not like so well. Some will like to puzzle over the philosophy of "The Two Voices," others the pretty story of "The Miller's Daughter" or "The Talking Oak," or the poetic "Ulysses" and "Lotus-Eaters," while others will wish to pass on to "Maud" with its varied rhythms. In "Maud" there is one often quoted passage which may be all that one will care to reread—the passage beginning, "Come into the garden, Maud, For the black bat, night, has flown." Nothing could be more perfectly and exquisitely rhythmical. And yet of all Tennyson's poems, it is probably the shortest that we shall like best, such as "The Flower in the Crannied Wall" and "Crossing the Bar," or such a stirring war poem as "Charge of the Light Brigade."

Nearly all of Tennyson's poems that he has retained in his complete works are well written and worth reading once; but if you ever come to like the higher poets you will find his best thinking expressed there better, and will turn to Tennyson more and more for the swinging music of his shorter songs, with their mood-making rhythms and haunting images.

And now let us turn to one of the great poets—to Browning. Most of us will be entirely unable to read the greater part of his poetry at all, and whether it is good or bad we must leave it to the critics to say. It will be best to buy him in a volume of selections, such as that he made himself

from his own poems and published in two volumes. We may make our selection from that, though in other collections we may find other poems we shall like quite as much as any of these.

First of all, let us say that it will probably take many days to learn to like even a few of Browning's poems; but once we have learned to like them they will be dearer to us than all the other poets. We measure his greatness by the intensity of the liking we have for what we do like.

Perhaps we have read "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" and found nothing very wonderful in it. If we ever come to love Browning, it will be because he was himself a lover, and we shall admire him because he was a fighter against the discouragements and littlenesses of the world.

Let us begin with his love poems—such a simple poem as "A Woman's Last Word." We shall not understand all of it; but no matter—we shall like it none the less on that account, and we shall like it the better the more we read it. Then let us read "Love Among the Ruins." We shall not understand all of that, either, but some we shall understand, and there will be new things to discover each time we reread, which should be many times. Possibly we shall never get tired of reading it over. And then we may read at pleasure such poems as "The Last Ride Together," "Any Wife to Any Husband," "In a Year," "Misconceptions," "Two in the Campagna," and "Evelyn Hope." There will be others which in time we shall be drawn to read,

such as "In a Gondola" and "The Statue and the Bust"; but the important thing is to learn to love, and to like to read and reread, two or three.

And now let us turn to that other side of Browning, his philosophy as a fighter and a struggler in the world. Begin with "Rabbi Ben Ezra." In a week, or a month, or a year, we may not have mastered it—indeed probably we shall never master it. So much the better; then we shall go on reading it and rereading it, and getting help and inspiration from it. There will be certain stanzas that will seem meant for us, and these we will mark, and in the margin we will make notes none will understand but ourselves.

Once master this one poem, and enough is accomplished—or at least the rest will take care of itself. We shall then read "Saul," and the haunting "Abt Vogler," "Andrea del Sarto," "A Toccata of Galuppi's," "Prospice" and "A Grammarian's Funeral."

There are other poems—yes, a good many others; but if you once come to love two or three, so that you like to turn to them, and find comfort in reading them, you will find the others for yourself, and if you do not find them, you will probably get all the more good out of the old ones.

We have perhaps said enough as to the manner of studying poetry, illustrating by the three poets we have considered. The reader will now be able to take up the following for himself, upon the hints given with each.

If you like Longfellow, read some of the best poems of the other New England poets—Whittier's

"Barefoot Boy," "Barbara Frietchie," "Maud Muller," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," and "Snow-Bound"; Holmes's "The Chambered Nautilus," "The One Floss Shay," "The Last Leaf," and "Old Ironsides"; Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," and "The First Snow-Fall"; and Bryant's "Thanatopsis." "To a Water Fowl," and "The Death of the Flowers."

Some may trace a likeness between the three great poems of Poe, "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and "The Bells," and Tennyson; but Poe will be found unique in his weird mood and rhythmic use of words.

From the lyric poems of Tennyson, turn to Shelley's "The Skylark" (one of the most beautiful poems in our language), and his "The Cloud," and "Ode to the West Wind"; and after picking up such little gems as "Love's Philosophy," we may learn to like "Alastor" and "The Sensitive Plant."

Once Byron was almost worshiped, while today we hardly do him justice. He is the poet of the "dark mood," and we shall probably find this mood in its greatest purity in his dramatic poems "Manfred" and "Cain," of each of which he is himself the hero. Rather than read entire such long poems as "Childe Harold," "The Giaour," "The Corsair," and "Don Juan," it will be better to read the striking passages—at least at first. We must judge from our taste for Byron how much we shall read of him.

No one should fail to read Keat's "Ode to a Grecian Urn." If we would read further, we may perhaps choose first "St. Agnes' Eve," "Ode to Autumn"

and "Endymion." It takes a fine poetic taste to appreciate Keats, for he is a poet "all of beauty," rich, fragrant, sensuous beauty, such beauty as we shall find nowhere else; but his thoughts and emotions of love and conquest over life are not very great.

Next to Browning, perhaps the greatest poet of the nineteenth century is Wordsworth. He is the very opposite of Browning, standing to Nature as Browning does to humanity. We shall find his creed stated in a poem which is one of the greatest in the English language, called simply "Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey"; and much the same thought we shall find expressed in more lyric form in his famous "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." Unquestionably the best of Wordsworth is to be found in Matthew Arnold's selections in the "Golden Treasury" series, and this is better to possess than the bulky complete works, much of which we shall find exceedingly dull and almost fatal to our liking for any poetry whatever. But there are also many beautiful simple poems of Wordsworth's which we should easily learn to like, among them, "We Are Seven," "Lucy Gray," "She Was a Phantom of Delight," "Three Years She Grew," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (Daffodils), and many of his sonnets, such as that to "Milton," "On Westminster Bridge," "To the River Duddon—Afterthought," "The World Is too Much With Us," etc.

Of the older poets, Burns stands by himself, one of the most popular of all poets who wrote in the English language. Best of all his poems are his simple love songs, such as "My Luve is Like the Red,

Red Rose," "Jean," "Highland Mary," and "To Mary in Heaven." Who can forget "Bannockburn," "Ye Banks and Brays of Bonnie Doon," and "John Anderson my Jo?" "The Man's the Gowd for a' That," and that beautiful little poem, "To a Mouse," are unique, because they show us the simple heart of a man in all its struggling simplicity. Some, too, will like to read and reread "The Cotter's Saturday Night." In the reading of Burns one can hardly go wrong; yet after all there is much even in Burns that we might well spare, and many and many a line of his poetry has no such charm as the poems we have mentioned; yet the reader who has learned to like these will, on reading any other poem, know and discover the difference almost at the first line.

If one wishes to find in poetry comfort for a weary mood, one will not look for it in such poets as Pope and Dryden, with their clever lines. Pope has more quotable lines than almost any other poet except Shakspeare; and his "Essay on Man" is interesting, and perhaps we may even find some charm in "The Rape of the Lock"; but on the whole one will miss little by reading him in a book of quotations.

Milton is different. He is the one noble and lofty poet of the English language. We shall not find any modern philosophy in him; but what is finer in its imagery and rhythm than his "Hymn to the Nativity"! And such lyrical poems as "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" will be found to possess an easy and surprising charm. "Paradise Lost" we should never read more than a page or two at a time, for

it is too great, too lofty for the common mind to bear it long; but who would miss the pleasure of reading this single page or two once a month or once a year?

There are certain single poems which no student of poetry will fail to read and reread as he does the poems of the great poets whom we study as men as well as the author of certain poems. One of these is Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," another is Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and his "Christabel"; Hood's "Bridge of Sighs" and the "Song of the Shirt"; Wolfe's "Burial of Sir John Moore"; Cowper's "Alexander Selkirk"; Campbell's "Hohenlinden"; and such bits as Ben Jonson's "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes," and Goldsmith's "When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly."

There are other poems by less known poets, which only the individual reader will find and make his own. For myself, I know no poems I like better to read than Matthew Arnold's "Tristram and Iseult," "Switzerland," and "Dover Beach"; while many admire poems by Emerson and George Eliot and Dickens in the same way, though we are not accustomed to think of these writers as among the great poets. Though Edward FitzGerald's "Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyam" is a translation, it is one of the most popular poems in the English language, and considered also one of the greatest.

Note: Many of the poems here mentioned may be found in "A Selection from the Great English Poets," edited by Sherwin Cody.

CHAPTER VI

HOW TO STUDY SHAKSPERE.

The best way to study Shakspeare is to go to see his plays at the theatre, especially when they are presented as Edwin Booth or Henry Irving have played them. What a change from the way in which they were presented in Shakspeare's own time! Then the scenery was so crude that they had to put out a sign on the stage saying, "This is a Forest," etc. And all the women's parts were played by boys or young men. There were no Mrs. Siddonses or Ellen Terrys in those days. It is said that Beethoven himself was not a very good piano player, and probably never heard some of his most beautiful sonatas played as Paderewski plays them today. Shakspeare probably never saw his plays acted so well as they have been acted many times since his day.

The first great actor to make Shakspeare classic was David Garrick, a friend of Sam Johnson. He was graceful, light, airy, and gay, yet made an instant success by the naturalness with which he played Richard III, and then Lear, and then Macbeth. Garrick was not an ideal Hamlet, but he gave good support to the famous Peg Woffington, who made her fame in Ophelia on the same stage with Garrick. The most seductive of Woffington's characters was Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and she played Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* with only less charm.

The stage mantle of Garrick fell on John Philip Kemble, who brought to Shakspeare's plays accurate and truthful scenery and costumes. Hamlet was his favourite part—and as he was a meditative and scholarly rather than a fiery actor, he made a deep impression with it. Sarah Siddons was his sister. She was called the Queen of Tragedy, and was indeed an ideal Roman matron in her impassioned acting of great parts, coupled with a dignified, almost commonplace everyday life. In a famous picture Sir Joshua Reynolds painted her as the tragic muse. She played Lady Macbeth as probably no one else has ever played it, indeed it is said when she was studying the part she became so frightened at her own impersonation that she rushed up stairs and jumped into bed with her clothes on. In Queen Katharine (Henry VIII), she played the part so realistically that the Surveyor, to whom she had said, "You were the Duke's Surveyor, and lost your office on complaint of the tenants," came off the stage perspiring with emotion and said, "That woman plays as if the thing were in earnest. She looked me so through and through with her black eyes that I would not for the world meet her on the stage again!"

Edmund Kean was a little man, but he played Shylock in the Merchant of Venice and Richard III as they had never been played before. Iago, too, was a famous character of his. He was admired by the aged widow of David Garrick, who called him David's successor, and he was praised by Byron.

Each age seems to have had its actor. Garrick was Johnson's friend. Kean belonged to Byron's day, and the actor of Dickens's time was Macready. The great American actor was Edwin Booth, who made us familiar with the whole line of Shakspearean tragic characters during nearly the whole of the last half of the nineteenth century. Who that has seen him slip on to the stage as the hunchback Richard III, or walk in the calm dignity of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, attired all in black velvet, can ever imagine those characters in any other personation!

The great tragedies seem to be the plays in which great actors have become most famous; but no play of Shakspeare's, not even the Merchant of Venice, has been more popular than Romeo and Juliet. In the time of Garrick a certain Barry Spanger was said to be the ideal Romeo. Charles Kemble, son of Philip, played it with great success. And his daughter Fanny Kemble was brought out as Juliet, much against her wish, to save her father's fortunes. She had had no training for the stage; but the play ran for one hundred and twenty nights with the greatest success.

There have been other great actors and actresses, all of whom (if English) have been famous in Shakspearean roles—Adelaide Neilson, Charlotte Cushman, and the American Edwin Forrest—and even many foreigners have tried Shakspeare. Salvini was the greatest of Othellos, and Adelaide Ristori was famous as Lady Macbeth. Even Bernhardt has taken the part of Hamlet. In our own time Henry Irving and Ellen Terry have been the best known

performers of Shakspeare's characters; but it would seem that all talented actors and actresses sooner or later test their greatness by attempting these roles.

The true way to study Shakspeare is by becoming fond of his characters; and this can be done most successfully only by seeing them on the stage. But we can learn to picture in our minds the parts they played in the great human drama, fashioning from imagination the scenes and personalities.

Children should be introduced to Shakspeare in the delightful "Tales from Shakspeare" by Charles and Mary Lamb. The first thing is to get the stories and the great characters, and the poetic antique language of Shakspeare himself may make this a little difficult at first.

Then we may read such a book as Mrs. Jameson's "Heroines of Shakspeare," in which we find the women of Shakspeare's plays described in simple modern language.

Then let us read the plays themselves, without thought of notes or comments, for the mere human interest of the story and the characters.

Probably the best play to begin with is the Merchant of Venice. Read it rapidly, passing lightly over the more commonplace portions. First you will come to the scene at Portia's house, when the wooers are opening the caskets in the hope that they may be lucky enough to win the wealthy lady. But Portia really loves Bassanio and wants him to choose aright, as he does, and she is charmingly happy because he is successful.

But the great scene of the play is in the fourth

act, when Shylock brings Antonio before the court, demanding his pound of flesh. Portia, disguised as a lawyer, appears to save his life. How graciously she does it! How much a man and woman too she is! How beautiful her speech about mercy, "dropping as the rain from heaven"!

Once having read the play through like this, for the story and the characters, lay it aside and at some future time read it again more thoroughly, stopping to enjoy Launcelot Gobbo, the clown, and the talkative Gratiano.

So with each rereading the interest in the play will grow, till you have become very fond not only of Portia and her friends, but of Shakspeare, too.

Next to the Merchant of Venice the most popular of Shakspeare's plays is Romeo and Juliet. In this the balcony scene is the most famous, in which Romeo comes to woo Juliet; but among the characters the most interesting will perhaps be Mercutio, Romeo's talkative and jolly friend, and Juliet's queer old nurse.

Of the tragedies, Hamlet is undoubtedly the greatest, but it is the hardest to read, and must be read many times to be fully appreciated. We are struck in the very first scene by the personality of the ghost, and of Hamlet's friend, Horatio, that quiet, calm gentleman who looks sympathetically on throughout the play, and lives to tell the story of Hamlet's infirm will. Polonius is a conventional old fool, but full of worldly wisdom, and the father of the brave Laertes and the sweet and pathetic Ophelia. How unhappy a girl she is! She is not

very strong, not very brave; but we are sorry indeed for her, and in mere reading really shed tears when she sings her sweetly crazy songs. How strange and interesting, too, is Hamlet's mother, and his scene with her toward the end of the play! And who can forget the conversation with the grave-diggers! Throughout we feel the atmosphere of philosophy and thought. Hamlet is indeed a very great and interesting play, but one requiring much time and leisurely thought. It is impossible to hurry in reading Hamlet.

Next in greatness to Hamlet is, perhaps, Lear. In the very first act we are struck with the beautiful nature of Cordelia, though she utters very few words. She does not appear again until the end; yet the poor interesting Fool is always talking about her to Lear. We detest the two ungrateful daughters, Goneril and Regan, and sympathize with Edgar, the outcast son of Gloster. How strange it seems that this fool, this insane old man, this homeless son pretending to be crazy, and this absent daughter, should hold our interest so perfectly!

More romantic, more polished, more correct in stage-craft, so that many call it Shakspeare's greatest play, is Othello. Yet we have no such love for the beautiful Desdemona as we had for Cordelia, or Juliet, or Portia. Iago is a masterpiece of scheming treachery, and we are somewhat sorry for the handsome and abused Moor Othello; but we can never like him quite as well as some of the others.

Macbeth is another great tragedy, and Lady Macbeth is a marvellous portrayal of a bad woman. We

are interested in the witches and their prophecies, and we know how true is Macbeth's ambition, and the greater ambition of his wife who drives him on. But in Macbeth there is no one to love, as there is in others of the plays.

In Julius Caesar it is the patriotic fervour of Brutus, mistaken though it may be, that interests us most, though we like to declaim the speech of Antony at Caesar's funeral.

Antony and Cleopatra makes an excellent play to read, for Cleopatra is so well known as a character that we already have a point of familiarity to start with. We feel that we are reading history, and these great Roman plays of Shakspeare's are probably the best history we shall ever get. With Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra we should also include Coriolanus, to be studied third in the series.

If we do not care for tragedy we shall have passed from Romeo and Juliet or the Merchant of Venice to As You Like It, one of the best of Shakspeare's lighter comedies. It is less deep, but not less charming than the heavier plays. The delightful Rosalind, disguised as a young man in the woods, the melancholy Jaques, and the amusing clown Touchstone, create an atmosphere of refinement which we will find nowhere else.

I myself like Much Ado About Nothing as well as any of the comedies. It tells the story of Benedick and Beatrice, who were never going to marry, they were such wits both of them! Yet they were tricked into it, and apparently enjoyed it after all. Where else will you find a woman joker?

The Taming of the Shrew is an interesting play if you admire a wilful, stubborn, pretty woman such as Kate was, and would like to know how her husband brought her into charming subjection. It is a very pretty play, and not less interesting for being somewhat out of date among our modern ideas of women.

But of all Shakspeare's comic characters, none is more original or famous than Falstaff. We meet him first in Henry V, perhaps the best of Shakspeare's historical plays. He is a wit, a coward, and a blow-hard, but Shakspeare never makes him overdo any of these traits, and so we cannot but find him intensely amusing. He reappears in the Merry Wives of Windsor, which Shakspeare is said to have written in order to please Queen Elizabeth.

The most intensely dramatic of the histories, and the first to read is Richard III. Richard is a scheming, daring fellow; and our love for the little princes put to death in the tower gives us a point of affection. Besides, this is the drama all the great tragic actors have been especially fond of playing.

Next to Richard III is Henry VIII, which is said to be only partly Shakspeare's. In it is Henry's great minister Wolsey, whose fall from power we witness as an event more tragic than death.

Last of all let us read the Tempest, that romantic play which Shakspeare probably wrote at the end of his career, as a sort of calm retrospect; for we may think of Prospero as Shakspeare himself.

There are other good plays of Shakspeare's; but if

we have not time to read all, these are the best to begin with.

The two poems, Venus and Adonis and Lucrece, are not the best of reading; but the sonnets are the very highest form of lyric poetry. They are entirely different from the plays, and those who like the plays often do not care at all for the sonnets, while many not familiar with the plays read the sonnets with admiration. Many believe they tell Shakspeare's own story of love for a man friend, and, in the last division from No. 126 on, for a dark woman. The sonnets to the man are the better, and if one reads them over a few times and feels the poet's reflection on change, time, and human love, he will certainly not doubt that here we really do come face to face with Shakspeare in his own proper character. These sonnets help us to a knowledge of the man and a personal liking for him such as we get for his characters when we read his plays.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEST ENGLISH ESSAYS.

Many people fancy that essays are not popular or easy reading; but when Addison published his Spectator, this little sheet of essays came out every morning, as a daily paper, and was immensely successful. Today there are not many standard novels that sell better than Lamb's Essays. Macaulay was read in his day from one end of the English-speaking world to the other, and so was Carlyle. Ruskin,

who was essentially an essayist, though of a peculiar type, received a hundred thousand dollars a year as profits on his books, which he published himself through George Allen, a printer in a small country town. And in our own country Emerson is a sort of bible to many people.

Those who learn to like essays become very fond of them, and it is only to people who never have read them much that they seem dry. The fact is, there are only certain writers and certain of their works that we shall care for.

If you like epigram, one of the best books to read is Bacon's Essays. Each essay is very short; the subjects are of everyday interest; and the sentences are short and sharp. One does not care to read much of such a book at a time—only a few pages. But Bacon's Essays is a book to own and take up for half an hour now and then through a number of years. We read these essays much as we do favourite poems.

Bacon belongs to the time of Shakspeare, and his language is a little antiquated. Much less so is that of Addison, who wrote over a hundred years later. There is a certain story-like character in his essays that makes them especially interesting. He tells us about Will Honeycomb and Sir Roger de Coverley. Sir Roger, of whom he writes in a series of essays, is especially interesting. Then Addison has humorous little papers on Advice in Love, the art of flirting the fan, etc., etc.

Swift, who wrote about the same time as Addison, is still more of a story teller. Gulliver's

Travels is often classed as a novel, though as a matter of fact it was written as a satirical essay on the foibles of England in Swift's day. Next to Gulliver's Travels we are likely to be most interested in A Tale of a Tub, and The Battle of the Books, which are more regular essays than Gulliver.

But the greatest of all the old essayists is Lamb. His most famous essay is that On Roast Pig, in which he tells the story of the origin of roast pig as a dish. Only less interesting is Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist, and the essay on Poor Relations.

The charm of Lamb is his humour, his good nature, his kindly heart, his quaint way of saying things. We learn to love him. No one has ever equalled him or imitated him. And when we have read his essays, we want to read his life—how he gave up the woman he loved to care for his poor sister who had killed her mother in a fit of insanity and had often to go to the asylum through all her life. Lamb was fond of his glass, and fond of the city, and fond of his friends. When we know him we must love him, and nothing else matters.

If we have a taste for the curious and lofty in description, we shall like De Quincey, the opium-eater. In the Confessions of an English Opium Eater we have an account of himself and his opium-eating, which is rather dry; but his wonderful dreams fascinate us. These we find at their best in his masterpieces *Suspiria de Profundis* and *The English Stage Coach*, which are indeed the height of impassioned prose, lofty poetry without meter, splendid dreams and fancies.

De Quincey wrote a great deal, and much that is merely dry and scholarly. But often he has something quaint and curious, such as his "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts," and wonderful stories such as the Flight of the Tartars and the Spanish Nun.

Carlyle wrote in such a jagged, queer, hard style that nowadays few people can get used to a book like *Sartor Resartus*. The philosophy of Sartor will be found in a delightfully simple essay entitled *Characteristics*, the point of view in which is deeply interesting. Another simple and readable essay is that on Burns, and the essay on Goethe is worth reading, and that on Jean Paul Richter. Perhaps when one gets used to him one will wish to read *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, *The French Revolution* (or a part of it), and last of all that queer philosophy of clothes, *Sartor Resartus*.

If one cares for philosophy he should certainly read Emerson's original essays, beginning with those on *Compensation*, *Self-Reliance*, *Love*, the *Over-Soul*, *Friendship*, *Circles*, and *Nature*.

Emerson's essays have no beginning or end, and one might as well begin in the middle as anywhere else. He does simply one thing and that is interpret man in the light of modern transcendental philosophy. He had caught the great philosophic idea that God, man, and nature are but one substance, governed by the same laws, reaching out to infinity, and kin to everything within the bounds of infinity. Every common thing in life he views again from this new point of view; and the revelation is wonder-

ful. Emerson does not discuss this philosophy or tell us anything about it; but he makes us see the whole world in the transforming light of it.

In his two original volumes of essays he does this supremely well; and then in many later volumes he does it over and over. Such volumes, good in their way but less original than the first, are *Representative Men*, *Society and Solitude*, and *Conduct of Life*.

Macaulay is not read nearly as much nowadays as he was in his own time. His style is oratorical, and highflown oratory, especially in essays, is not popular today. For all that, one cannot well afford to miss reading the famous descriptive essays on the Trial of Warren Hastings, Lord Clive, Milton (in which will be found the famous description of the Puritans), and the essay on History. There are two first rate essays on Samuel Johnson, the best one being a review of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, beginning at the point at which Macaulay finishes with Croker and takes up Boswell. Another good essay is that on Frances Burney or Madame D'Arblay. Those who have time will even wish to read Macaulay's *History of England*, with its wonderful and gorgeous descriptions, that make the scene live before the eyes. —

Of splendid modern prose writers, Ruskin is one of the greatest. It takes a little effort and a little choosing to learn to like him; but those who will take the pains to study him will be richly rewarded.

About the simplest thing he wrote was *Ethics of the Dust*, a series of conversations with some

young girls about nature and everyday life. Children of ten are said to have read this book and liked it; yet it is by no means childish, and anyone might enjoy it.

Next in general interest and simplicity is *Sesame and Lilies*—a queer title. The first chapter is "Of King's Treasuries"—meaning books; and the second "Of Queens' Gardens," meaning the dominion over nature and society which culture gives a woman. This is one of the very best books ever written on *How and What to Read*, though written in a very symbolic style that will require more than one reading fully to understand it.

Another book of quite a different kind is called in Ruskin's odd fashion *Crown of Wild Olives*. It is a series of essays on work and the things in life worth working for.

These three books are short, and perhaps at first many will not like them very much; but liking will grow with time.

There is a book, however, that will well repay getting and reading in part, from time to time, for many years. That is *Modern Painters*. It is in four large volumes, and from the title one might suppose it was a technical history of modern painting. This is not the fact, however. It is a popular study of the noblest element in art, and throughout the four volumes one will find marvellous pictures of word-painting, such as Ruskin's description of Turner's *Slave Ship*, when he is discussing sea-painting. He talks of art and nature, always looking at art from the point of view of nature; and

the volumes are so well divided into chapters and sections, each with its title and sub-title, that one can pick out an interesting subject here, and another there. It will be of especial interest and value to any one who cares at all about art. Ruskin wrote the first volume of this work before he was twenty-four, and it is perhaps the most brilliant thing he ever did. It is full of life and colour and splendid word-painting.

The reader who believes in culture and wishes to cultivate the esthetic and refined should certainly read Matthew Arnold's book *Culture and Anarchy*. It requires a close and logical mind to appreciate and understand him, and to read and like him is not easy, but a liking for his chapter on Sweetness and Light is an excellent test of one's real success in the cultivation of culture.

It will be seen that there are good essays of many types. There is the epigrammatic discussion of everyday matters, such as we find in Bacon, and in quite a different way in Emerson; and there is the quaint and playful humour of Addison and Lamb; there is the splendid rhetoric of De Quincey and of Macaulay, and the splendid word-painting of Ruskin; there is the preaching of Carlyle, and the literary lecturing of Matthew Arnold. If we cannot know all, we must choose our bent and follow the lines we like best.

The most popular form of the essay is that of Addison and Lamb, the quaint, amusing, human badinage on familiar topics, full of love, and full of sense. Along this line there are a few good

modern books—Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, Ik Marvel's *Reveries of a Bachelor*, Charles Dudley Warner's *Backlog Studies*, and Barrie's *My Lady Nicotine* and *When a Man's Single*.*

The essay can never be read in a hurry, nor by one who feels himself rushed. The great essayists wrote in the most leisurely manner possible, a very little at a time, and only when in precisely the right mood. In the same way must they be read—alone, before an open fire, of a long winter evening. The woman who delights in these things will sit curled up in a great easychair, her head tipped against the back, the light well shaded over her shoulder. The man will, if he is a smoker, inevitably want his pipe. No modern cigar will do, and the vulgarity of chewing is utterly inconsistent with a taste for reading essays. It is the refined, the imaginative, and the dreamy who will especially delight in this form of literature.

Note: Most of the essays mentioned in this chapter will be found in a volume entitled "*The Best English Essays*," edited by Sherwin Cody.

*Barrie's great novel is *The Little Minister*.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD NOVELS THAT ARE GOOD.

At the top of the ladder of literature is poetry, to which only a few succeed in climbing. Next is the essay, a large comfortable niche cut in the side of the rock of ages, which is never crowded, and so is all the more grateful to those who frequent it. And down at the bottom is the novel, which we all read.

Novels are read for various reasons, which are not often truthfully set down by the professional critic. Truth, however, is always best, and no one need be ashamed of it.

Most of us read novels for the same reason that we go to the theatre—for amusement. We want to get away from the weary commonplace things about us, and get some refreshment by dipping into another world. Perhaps our social world is narrow; but in a good novel we may move in the best society. Possibly we are ambitious, and wish to read of the things we would like to have if we could. Reading about them is next best to having them. Or possibly our world is so unexciting and dreary that we need the excitement of an exciting novel to keep us from dying of decay. Excitement is a good thing, really necessary to life, however bad it may be when carried to extremes. Some people become feverish in their chase for excitement and in their constant reading of exciting novels; but we

must not condemn the healthy for the excesses of the mentally sick.

The excitement afforded by novels is of several different kinds. There is the excitement of love and passion—perhaps the most deeply grained sentiment of the human heart, and apparently the most necessary to health of the heart, especially in these days when our spontaneous emotions are constantly being repressed. Then there is the excitement of travel and adventure. Finally we have the novel of intellectual piquancy, the book full of epigrams and smart sayings such as Oscar Wilde might have written. The novel of love and passion may be the lascivious and dirty book, or sin equally by being the weakly sentimental Sunday school story. The abuse of the novel of travel and adventure is the cheap dime novel, or the high-priced dime novel called the historical romance. And the extreme of the epigrammatic story is the snobby smart novel, which tends to make prigs of us. This last novel is largely a modern development.

In any of these lines a novel is good if it gives us real men and women, acting naturally and truly, and is written with sufficient rapidity and lightness. The great sin in a novel is ignorance of human nature; and the next sin is dullness. Either is fatal.

The oldest examples of modern fiction are two great collections of tavern tales—Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the *Arabian Nights*. These stories were told to amuse; because they amused those who listened to them, they have well succeeded in

amusing English readers for several hundred years since. The Decameron is largely a series of stories of love and passion. They are many of them exceedingly amusing even to the modern reader; but according to modern standards so many of them are actually indecent that a translation of this book is hardly to be obtained in a respectable bookstore, and should never be allowed in the hands of a person under twenty-five.

For the young the great book of exciting adventure is the Arabian Nights. All the indecent stories have been omitted in the modern translations, and the excitement stops short of the point at which it can do any serious harm in over-stimulation. The best story to begin with is that of Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp—a story every one ought to be familiar with; and next to that the series of tales of the adventures of Sinbad the Sailor. After reading these, turn to Poe's clever "Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherezade," which closely follows the adventures of Sinbad, but bases every wonder on a scientific fact stated in a note. This modern tale of wonder is much more marvellous than the imaginary wonder stories of the ancients, though its wonders are in reality strict truths. Mr. H. G. Wells, the modern novelist, has followed out the same line successfully in his pseudo-scientific stories. By comparative study of this kind one will find fresh interest in an old book.

The Decameron and the Arabian Nights are not properly novels, but rather collections of short stories. The oldest readable novel is Don Quixote.

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It is an excellent book to read aloud in a mixed company, and is still as funny as any modern book. Don Quixote is a gentleman of kind heart and a certain innate refinement, in spite of the crack in his brain and his tilting at windmills. Sancho Panza is the thoroughly practical, faithful clown; and Sancho Panza's mule and Don Quixote's warhorse are characters in themselves. The book was written as a satire on chivalry; but its humanity has made it live long since the death of knight-errantry. Gulliver, too, was a satire, but now we read it merely as an amusing story; and Fielding's Joseph Andrews was commenced as a satire on Richardson's Pamela, but became so interesting as a story that even in its own day readers forgot all about the parody.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was written in the seventeenth century, by a tinker, in prison; and it is a distinctly religious book. But even the non-religious will admit that it is a good human story. Intended originally as an allegory, we read it now for its own story interest.

Along with the *Arabian Nights* young people should, without exception, read *Robinson Crusoe*. Nearly every one has read it; but there are parts of it that will bear reading again and again and many times. The introduction may be skipped; but beginning with Crusoe's shipwreck on the island we are deeply fascinated by all he does to care for himself and find some amusement. He is an intensely practical man, and never gets sentimental, because he is always at work, a good thing for some

of us moderns who are inclined to bemoan our lot. For about a hundred pages this account of the life on the island continues, but when Crusoe is rescued the interest grows less, and we may very well omit the last half of the book.

The first modern novel was begun by Richardson somewhat over a hundred and fifty years ago as a book of instruction on correct letter writing. Richardson was a printer fifty years old. In his youth he had often helped young ladies write love letters. So it was thought he could write a good book of model letters. He put a story into them to make them more lifelike and interesting, and the story turned out to be the beginning of modern fiction as an established form of literature, for the good novels that had gone before had not led the way for others as Richardson's books did.

All Richardson's novels are written in the form of letters, and to modern readers are decidedly tedious.

Clarissa Harlowe is the best of them; but it is much too long, and often dull. Clarissa is beset by Lovelace, spirited away, made to quarrel with her family, and outwardly compromised in every possible fashion; but through it all she maintains her maiden purity, and finally compels the man to marry her. We would like her better if she were a little more human and spontaneous—in short, if she had been a little more of a sinner.

But there is one novel of that day and time which is first rate reading even to-day, and that is Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Fielding was a rake and a

joker. He started as a novelist by making fun of the good Richardson. But his characters are certainly natural, even if a little spicy. Tom came into the world in an irregular way, and led a very irregular life. He is by no means a model for the young, and Fielding tells of his sins in a way that to-day would be considered positively indecent. And yet we cannot help liking Tom, and he comes out all right at the end. Sophia Western forgives him for his faults, and loves and marries him. Old Squire Western is one of the most famous characters in the book, and a mixture of shrewdness, drollery, roughness and good-heartedness he certainly is.

Other books of this period which have been often spoken of are Smollett's *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Humphrey Clinker*, and Stern's *Tristram Shandy*; but they are a little tedious to the modern reader, and like Richardson's novels must probably be left on the library shelves.

The last of the good novels of this period is Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. The perfect simplicity of this story is its eternal recommendation. The Vicar is a simple-minded man, and somebody is always "doing him" or his simple son or his vain wife and daughters. We cannot help liking the old man for his unquenchable cheerfulness under all misfortunes, and the women, though old-fashioned, are not yet out of date in their feminine weaknesses. It is the very shortest of old-time novels. Some may not like so very simple a story, but if one has a sense of dry humour, the Vicar will be found good reading.

There is also a French novel of this period which deserves to be read much more than it is. It is hard to tell just why it has somehow fallen into obscurity, unless it is the fact that it is French, and as unlike any other French novel as possible. It is Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, and the scene is Spain. *Gil* is not unlike *Tom Jones*, though more of a wanderer, and goes from one adventure to another. Though some of his experiences are risqué, not one of them is offensive or even approaching indecency. The most innocent person will not be offended by anything in *Gil Blas*, for evidently Le Sage was a pure-minded man. The adventures are both exciting and amusing; and there is a fine string of them.

There is nothing subtle about the old-time novels. They are excellent amusing stories, and that is all. Originally no more than tavern yarns, they have lived because they give us real men and women, and tell the truth about human nature. They are not very refined, and there is nothing aristocratic about them. They come from the people, and have something of the vulgarity of the people about them. But time has softened away the objectionable points. While we may be offended by present-day vulgarity, we probably will not even recognize that of a former age.

CHAPTER IX.

*THE ROMANTIC NOVELISTS—SCOTT,
HUGO, DUMAS.*

After the publication of the *Vicar of Wakefield* in 1766, for nearly fifty years no great novel appeared. True, Frances Burney's *Evalina* appeared, but it is dry reading to-day. It is also true that some of Jane Austen's best novels were written, but they were not published. The long silence was broken by the anonymous publication of *Waverley* in 1814.

Scott had got into the printing business with James Ballantyne, and then into the publishing business. His *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *Lady of the Lake*—story poems as they were—were read like novels, and had brought him thousands of pounds. But his popularity was waning, and he needed some book to make good the losses of bad business investments. *Waverley* had been begun several years before, but as Ballantyne did not like what had been written, it was thrown into a drawer and forgotten. Scott now pulled it out and finished it. It was published, and made an instant success. The name of the author was withheld at first, because Scott was somewhat ashamed of being known as a novelist—he who was famous as a poet; and afterwards because of Scott's humour, as he called it. Perhaps the mystery of the

"Great Unknown" added some commercial value to the publications.

Waverley is not one of Scott's best. The hero is rather a disagreeable fellow, and the scenes are neither great nor memorable. But the book is noteworthy because it is the first of one of the most successful series of novels ever produced.

The best of the Waverley novels is usually considered to be *Ivanhoe*, though many like *Kenilworth*, *Old Mortality*, or *Quentin Durward* better.

Ivanhoe is a tale of the time of Richard I, called the Lion-hearted. Richard has been imprisoned on the continent of Europe, whither he had gone to take part in the Crusades. His brother is on the throne in his absence, and now is preparing to make himself king.

The story opens with preparations for a grand tournament. *Ivanhoe*, the son of a Saxon lord, has secretly returned from the Holy Land, where he has served with Richard, and takes part in the tourney, winning the crown on the first day and choosing Rowena, his cousin, the Queen of Love. But he has seen and been fascinated by Rebecca, a beautiful Jewess, whose father had lent him armour. On the second day *Ivanhoe* is overcome, but he is saved by the entrance of a strange black knight, in reality Richard himself returned. The Black Knight wins the crown, but instantly disappears and leaves *Ivanhoe* to be adjudged the victor of the day.

One of the most amusing scenes is that in the woods when the king feasts with Friar Tuck, the

confessor of Robin Hood's men, for Robin Hood and his outlaws play an important part in this story. One of the most dramatic scenes is the burning of the castle in which De Bracy has imprisoned the beautiful Rowena, the Jewess Rebecca, and the wounded Ivanhoe.

Scott's novels are filled with splendid descriptions, his characters are noble gentlemen and ladies, and he tells of historic events worth chronicling. They are sometimes too long; but it is easy to skip the less interesting passages. Scott can never be said to be tiresome.

Kenilworth is a story of Leicester, Queen Elizabeth's lover. He has married Amy Robsart; but that there may be no barrier to his marriage with the Queen, he causes Amy to be made away with. In the course of the story Queen Elizabeth visits the castle of Kenilworth, and we have a splendid description of the historic shows and games, as we had of the tournament in Ivanhoe. Our sympathies are with Amy Robsart, and the story of her death is intensely dramatic.

Quite different is the story of Quentin Durward—a young Englishman in France in the days of Louis XI. Quentin was sent to escort a certain beautiful Isabelle and her aunt to the Bishop of Liege, on an understanding that a certain outlaw was to capture the girl and marry her. Quentin Durward succeeded in defending his charge, and after many adventures and escapes, was given the girl in marriage.

To many the best of Scott's novels are his Scot-

tish stories. The best of these is *Old Mortality*, a strictly historical tale of the seventeenth century. But to many a more fascinating tale is *The Heart of Midlothian*, with its pathetic story of Effie and Jeanie Deans. Other good Scotch novels of Scott's are *The Monastery*, *Redgauntlet* and *The Antiquary*. *Guy Mannering* is an English historical story, in which Scott himself is said to figure as Alan Fairford. Other good novels are *Robin Hood*, *Woodstock*, *The Abbot*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and *The Pirate*. The only poor stories he ever wrote are *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous*, both written when he was declining to his death and kept on writing merely in the hope that he might finish paying off his debts before he died.

In all there are thirty-two of these books. No other English novelist has written so many that continue popular. Dumas is said to have written or attached his name to twelve hundred; but only three or four are considered very well worth reading to-day. Victor Hugo wrote one great novel, *Les Misérables*, but his next greatest, *The Toilers of the Sea*, is far below the first one. Balzac and Dickens alone have lists to compare with Scott's.

Scott's novels are romantic and interesting. They are on the whole excellent history,—indeed their history is as good as that of Shakspeare. Scott was a noble, generous, lovable man, and his books are as pure and great as he is. There is no fine character-drawing, no sentimental studies of women, no

philosophy, no moralizing. But we see a splendid and varied company of gentlemen and ladies of historic Britain, dressed in all the picturesqueness of their age, and passing through a series of scenes as romantic and exciting as gentlemen and ladies could ever participate in. There is nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to be wary of in Scott, and there is nothing that suggests vulgarity. No one can help loving, admiring, and respecting the man, or enjoying his novels.

Scott's own life is almost as romantic in a way as his novels. His father was a lawyer, and he entered that profession, but did little more than hold a number of salaried positions. His first book was a volume of old ballads which he had collected and partly rewritten. Then came the wonderfully successful poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and after that *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. He was only less popular as a narrative poet than Byron. But he became entangled in business investments with the brothers Ballantyne, old school friends of his, and saved himself and them from bankruptcy only by the lucky venture of *Waverley*, which immediately carried him to world-wide and lasting fame, and put him in the way of earning a million dollars by his writings. "Novelist, critic, historian, poet, the favorite of his age, read over the whole of Europe," says Taine, "he was compared and almost equalled to Shakspeare, had more popularity than Voltaire, made dress-makers and duchesses weep, and earned about £200,000." It was his ambition to found a sort of

feudal family, and on land which he purchased at Abbotsford he built a castle in imitation of the ancient knights, "with a tall tower at either end . . . sundry zig-zag gables . . . a myriad of indentations and parapets and machiolated eaves; most fantastic waterspouts; labelled windows, not a few of them painted glass . . . stones carved with innumerable heraldries." Here he kept open house. But in 1825 his publisher, Constable, failed, carrying down the printing firm of James Ballentyne & Co., and Scott, because of his partnership interest, found himself liable for debts amounting to over half a million dollars. He immediately set about paying these off by his pen. For a *Life of Napoleon* he got \$90,000, and for the novel of *Woodstock* he got \$40,000. He exhausted himself in the effort, and died seven years later, owing only £30,000, which a publisher advanced on all his copyrights.

He did not begin to write novels until he was forty-two, and then he turned them out with incredible speed. *Waverley* was written in three weeks, and another was written in "six weeks at Christmas." He wrote thirty-two novels in sixteen years, besides doing various other work such as his *Life of Napoleon*.

Taine summarizes his style as a novelist thus: "In history as in architecture he was bent on arranging points of view and Gothic halls. He had neither talent nor leisure to reach the depths of his characters." And again, "After all, his characters, to whatever age he transfers them, are his

neighbours, cannie farmers, vain lords, gloved gentlemen, young marriageable ladies, all more or less commonplace."

But the romantic novel was carried to its greatest heights of interest and excitement by Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo—especially Dumas. These two young Frenchmen had heard of Scott's fame, and had read his novels, and they made up their minds that this was the popular line to follow. So each brought out a romantic play in Paris, which was successful. Thus the romantic movement was started in France; and it was not long before the novels began to appear, and were so popular that Dumas set up a sort of novel factory, where he had many people working for him writing novels for which he had orders. In all he turned out over twelve hundred.

Next to Scott, Dumas is the great original historic novelist. His books are not such good history as Scott's, but they are much more interesting. Yet there are comparatively few of the twelve hundred bearing the name of Dumas that one cares to read to-day.

Of these the most characteristic is *The Three Musketeers* and its two sequels, *Twenty Years After*, and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*.

The three novels cover the period in France from 1625 to 1665, and every page is alive with duels, escapes, intrigues, and all sorts of French adventures. A country lad from Gascony named D'Artagnan comes up to Paris in search of adven-

ture. He is riding a raw-boned yellow pony, and has three crowns in his pocket. The first day he gets into three duels, and in each case makes a friend of his antagonist. These three friends, called Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, follow him through all his adventures. All become great and powerful men in France. This is the point in which the great novelists differ from the less. They give us great men, while the little ones give us only common men.

Dumas's success with *The Three Musketeers* has led to many modern books of the same sort, the best of which are probably Stanley Weyman's *House of the Wolf*, *Under the Red Robe*, and *Gentleman of France*, and Anthony Hope's *Prisoner of Zenda*.

But Dumas wrote one modern, semi-historical novel which has not been imitated so successfully, and if anything it is more famous than *The Three Musketeers*. It is *The Count of Monte Cristo*. (It really appeared before *The Three Musketeers*.)

The hero is a mate of a ship, of which he hopes soon to become captain, and lover of a beautiful girl, whom he hopes soon to marry. The story opens in 1815. The hero is accused by his two rivals (one of whom wants the ship and the other the girl), of being engaged in carrying dangerous information to Napoleon, who is in exile on the island of Elba. He is thrown into prison, where he remains for twenty years.

Among the prisoners is a fellow thought to be

mad, who tells of a wonderful treasure hidden on the island of Monte Cristo, off the coast of Italy

Our hero escapes from prison, finds the treasure, and appears in the fashionable world as the rich and mysterious Count of Monte Cristo.

His motive in life now is revenge upon those who had put him in prison. One is a rich banker. Another is a distinguished general. A third is an influential magistrate.

The story is exciting and romantic in the extreme, and ends in tragic and dramatic pathos. Some think the gloomy ending spoils it; but if it has any fault it is that of being, like most of Dumas's novels, a little too long.

The stories already mentioned will give most persons reading enough of this kind; but if more is wanted, we might recommend *The Queen's Necklace* and the three connected novels, *Queen Margot* (or *Marguerite of Valois*), *The Lady of Monsoreau*, and *The Forty-five*. Less interesting is *The Memoirs of a Physician*, for which Dumas made a study of hypnotism. Also Thackeray recommends a simple little story called *The Black Tulip*—which is so innocent any schoolgirl might read it without offense. The truth is, Dumas is seldom immoral, never indecent. To these add his two accounts of himself, his *Memoirs* and the story of the animals he loved, *My Pets*.

Dumas's father was the son of a marquis, who had gone to Hayti and married a negress. The novelist was therefore a quadroon. The young fellow came to Paris with nothing, made his fortune

as a playwright (his income in one year was \$200,000, it is said), became even more successful as a novelist, built a theatre and a chateau which he called Monte Cristo, contracted for forty novels in one year, ruined himself by his recklessness and gaieties, was reduced to poverty, and died with less than he began life with. Throughout his novels we find the same reckless gaiety, and this is the element which makes them so popular. At one extreme is Scott, the honest, the honourable, the faithful; at the other is Dumas, an adventurer, reckless, irresponsible, but good at heart and as much a genius as Scott.

Victor Hugo is undoubtedly a far greater figure in French literature than Dumas. In France he is honoured as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of French poets. He was an accomplished artist, and a man of strong and admirable character. Victor Hugo is a large figure in the French history of the nineteenth century, and his one great novel is a colossal monument to his fame that all may understand and read with intense interest.

Born of a noble family in 1802, he went to Paris and at twenty published a volume of poems that laid the foundation of his literary and artistic reputation. In 1830 he, like Dumas, produced a successful play, and found himself established in French literature. The next year—long before Dumas thought of writing a story—he published *Notre Dame de Paris*, his first great novel. It is a many-sided story of Fate, centred about the

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famous old cathedral of Notre Dame, the "book" of the middle ages.

Many years passed before Victor Hugo was again to appear as a novelist. He wrote plays and poems, and took part in politics. As a result of the revolution which brought Napoleon III. to the throne, Victor Hugo was forced into exile, and lived for a number of years in the British island of Guernsey. Here he wrote his one great, monumental novel, *Les Misérables*, which is as fascinating and romantic as it is great as a work of literary art and a portrayal of social conditions and a study of universal human nature. When it appeared in 1862 Dumas had made his fame and fortune and had fallen into poverty, Thackeray was dead, and Dickens had but a few years to live. Balzac and Poe were already gone some years, and Hawthorne had but two more years to live. In a way *Les Misérables* is a summary of all these.

The principal character is Jean Valjean, a criminal who again and again builds up his little social position, only to see it crumble in an hour when his prison record is revealed. He wanders through Paris, and into the provinces of France, and stops on the battlefield of Waterloo. Everywhere he finds tragedy, human joy and suffering, and incidents that hold the attention breathless. Nothing seems forced or strange or unusual, yet everything is as dramatic as the most fanciful imaginations of Scott or Dumas. And like Dickens, he gave us a long role of notable characters.

Les Misérables is an immense book, extending in-

to six large volumes, and would require two or three months to read through carefully. It is a sort of library of fiction, to be compared to Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, or Zola's *Rougon-Macquart* series of novels. Few will read it from preface to finis, but it does not need to be read as a whole, for every book, nearly every chapter, is fairly complete in itself.

Hugo wrote only three other novels, *Toilers of the Sea*, which has some fine descriptions of life at the bottom of the ocean, *Ninety-three*, his last, and *the Man Who Laughs*, an inferior work.

Though Eugene Sue is not reckoned a great novelist, two of his books which appeared when the fame of Dumas was at its height have continued to be read. They are *the Wandering Jew* and *the Mysteries of Paris*. The story of *the Wandering Jew* is based on the legend of the man at whose door the Saviour asked to rest His cross only to receive the reply "Go on!" "Thou shalt go on forever!" answered the Saviour, and the Jew became an eternal wanderer. One of his descendants turned Catholic to save his fortune, but his secret was discovered and his estate confiscated, all but a hundred and fifty thousand francs, which was left to accumulate for a hundred and fifty years, when it might be claimed by certain of his heirs. The story is largely concerned with the various ways in which the Jesuits hunt down all the heirs but a young priest who has made over to the society all his fortune. But they are defeated in the end. The book is written

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from the extreme Protestant point of view, and is a series of episodes and exciting adventures.

In the romantic and historical school of Scott an important writer is the American James Fenimore Cooper. He first tried an English domestic novel, which he published at his own expense; but Scott, whose novels were then at the height of their popularity (1820) inspired him with different ambitions, and he wrote *The Pilot* to correct the nautical errors of Scott's *Pirate*.

Cooper wrote a large number of novels, but the only ones read to-day are those which describe American pioneer life. His characters are less real and individual than Scott's even; but his fine pictures of the woods, the Indians, and the adventures of the early pioneers have never been surpassed.

His first readable novel is *The Spy*, in which appears his one good character, Harvey Birch. The others of special interest are in the so-called Leatherstocking series, and are—

The Pioneer, 1823.

The Pilot, 1823.

The Last of the Mohicans, 1826 (called his best).

The Prairie, 1827.

The Pathfinder, 1840.

The Deerslayer, 1841.

Wyandotte, 1843.

The Redskins, 1846 (the least notable).

Bulwer-Lytton was a prolific novelist, but only one of his stories remains to us as indisputably great.

That is *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which we read for its history quite as much as for its fascinating story.

Charles Kingsley a little later produced two good novels, *Hypatia* and *Westward, Ho.* *Hypatia* is an historical account of Egypt in the days when Alexandria was the flourishing city, and *Hypatia* is truly and learnedly drawn. The narrative is by no means so exciting as most other famous historical novels.

Captain Frederick Marryat was popular in his day, but he seems to be little read in the present age. His most popular novel was *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and *The Phantom Ship* is said to be the best sea novel ever written. *The Pacha of Many Tales* is a collection of most romantic and exciting short stories, told by one man, and probably the best worth reading of anything Marryat has left.

The last of the great historical novelists was Charles Reade, whose *Cloister and the Hearth* is considered by many one of the greatest novels of this kind ever written. But the fame of this is shared by his Dickensque stories *Never Too Late to Mend*, *Hard Cash*, and *Put Yourself in His Place*.

Among modern historical novelists Gen. Lew Wallace with his *Ben-Hur*, a *Tale of the Christ*, and the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz with his *Quo Vadis* and other novels, are most likely to become classic.

CHAPTER X

*THE REALISTIC NOVELISTS—DICKENS,
THACKERAY, BALZAC.*

The pendulum of human interest swings quickly from one side to the other. Within five years of the appearance of the last of the Waverley novels there appeared in England a novelist as great as Scott and in every way his direct antithesis. Scott was a splendid story-teller. With a swift brush he painted large scenes and large characters. His brilliant pageantry moved easily and steadily from the beginning to the end of more than thirty novels, most of which were published in three stately volumes. In 1835 came Dickens, with his disconnected sketches of ordinary types of Englishmen. His first great success, *Pickwick*, was written from week to week as it was published. The author never knew three chapters ahead what would happen to his characters; nor did it matter. He had his characters, he had Mr. *Pickwick* and Sam Weller and the rest; what mattered anything else? As the story went on something would happen to them, and that was enough.

And with Dickens we have an entirely different style of writing. The Waverley novels are written with more or less fine language, large words, sweeping phrases; *Pickwick* was a great bubbling mass of sentiment and emotion, pathos, humour, the cold feeling, the hot feeling, the shaky feeling, the melan-

choly feeling, the riotous feeling—one might go on forever. With every turn of his pen this new magician plays upon our heart-strings, possesses us, fills us, makes us laugh or cry at will. The very collocation of his words causes our flesh to quiver and the blood to leap in our veins, and holds our attention spell-bound. What Jane Austen did in her fine way, to the despair of Scott, Dickens did in his big, coarse, splashing way, and with ten times the genius.

Dickens's father was a poor man in the navy-pay office, at first with a yearly salary of £80. Micawber in *David Copperfield* was drawn from him. Even when he got as much as £350 a year he was always in debt, and finally landed in the Marshalsea, which Dickens so vividly describes in *Little Dorrit*.

While still a child, Charles was sent to work in a blacking warehouse, described as the establishment of Murdstone & Grinby in *David Copperfield*. He had a terribly hard life of it. But after a while he was taken away and sent to school for a short time, finally studying shorthand and becoming a newspaper reporter of the debates in Parliament at a time when these were taken down verbatim.

By the time he was twenty-four he was getting about thirty-five dollars a week. He tried a few sketches in a magazine (*Sketches by Boz*) which were successful in their way, and finally was asked by Chapman & Hall to write the text for some sporting pictures by a noted artist of the day. This turned out to be *Pickwick*, became instantly popular, and Dickens was a famous novelist before he

was twenty-five. He wrote about twenty novels, and earned as much money as Scott (a million dollars), though many more copies of his novels have been published. He may be considered the most popular English novelist that ever wrote.

Pickwick, Dickens's first novel, is undoubtedly also his most humorous. It tells of the doings of a farcical club headed by Mr. Pickwick. But Pickwick's servant, Sam Weller, is the most amusing character in it, and as a character probably the most famous in all Dickens's works.

Next to Pickwick in popularity, and by many liked much better, is David Copperfield. This is nothing less than a pathetic and intensely human autobiography of Dickens himself, with certain fictitious additions. David Copperfield is Charles Dickens (notice the reversed initials), Micawber is Dickens's own father, and Dora was Dickens's first love. Only a passionately sympathetic heart could have conceived this story, and only a man with an overflowing genius for work could have written it in the spontaneous and natural way that Dickens did.

Third in the list of popularity is probably *The Old Curiosity Shop*, in which appears Little Nell, the description of whose pathetic death is found in every school reader. This volume also tells the story of Mr. Quilp, the dwarf, the Marchioness, and Dick Swiveller. *Oliver Twist* was written partly as an attack on workhouses in Dickens's day. It tells us the story of a poor waif, and takes us among thieves, introducing us to the famous Fagin, Bill Sikes and Nancy. *Little Dorrit* is the story of the Marshalsea,

the great debtors' prison in which Dickens's own father at one time resided. *Dombey & Son* tells the pathetic story of little Paul Dombey, the boy mate to Little Nell; *Martin Chuzzlewit* introduces us to the inimitable Pecksniff and family. *Barnaby Rudge* is a sort of detective story, telling of a murder and how it was found out. *Bleak House* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are also considered to be among the best of Dickens's novels.

By many his greatest is thought to be *A Tale of Two Cities*, an intensely dramatic historical novel of the French Revolution. It is entirely different from anything else Dickens ever wrote, yet the pathetic and sympathetic character-drawing makes it entirely unlike the historical novels of Scott or Dumas.

His short Christmas stories are also among his best work, especially *A Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes*, and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Either may be read in an hour or two. W. E. Henley considers *Barbox Bros.*, a beautiful and simple story of a lame girl, a little child, and a man running away from his birthday, even better; but it is not found in most complete editions and only recently has been published in separate form.

When the name of Dickens is mentioned that of Thackeray is also always on the tongue, yet there are large numbers even of the most refined people who do not find Thackeray as good reading as Dickens. It takes a quiet person, with a sense for the intellectual, the sarcastic and the ironical as opposed to

the sentimental and humorous, a person with gentlemanly or ladylike instincts, to fall quite into sympathy with Thackeray. But those who love him, love him with an intensity surpassing their feeling for any other author. Thackeray penetrates life with his keen shafts. He is strong because of his reserves, Dickens because of his lack of reserve. Thackeray has polish and elegance of style, he is a master of the best English, and handles it with the ease and grace of inborn, hereditary skill. He could not have made such personal confessions as David Copperfield or Little Dorrit, he could not have laid the colour on with the indiscriminate profusion of Pickwick or the scenes describing Little Nell. He was in no sense a great emotional artist, for only now and then does he lose himself. Such passages as the death of Colonel Newcome are few in Thackeray. He is more often ridiculing foibles than gaining our sympathy for admirable sinners. He bites and stings; and unless we have a fine heart to perceive it we never become aware that he is winning too, that under his cynical perception of the truth of things in this world, especially in the aristocratic society which alone he knew and of which alone he wrote, he has a great and loving heart, a heart tender and forgiving, sympathetic even when he ridicules most unmercifully. It is this great loving heart, so hidden that it can be seen only by those who are truly his friends, that makes Thackeray, the belated exponent of a class in itself repulsive to the average democrat of to-day, in some respects the greatest writer of fiction in the English

language. He has grave faults: he is always preaching; he is seldom very hopeful; he had no great belief in himself or his mission in the world. But language in his hands is almost a living and breathing entity, a polished, perfect instrument. And Thackeray teaches the great lessons of restraint, of patience and thoughtful study of life, of the little, nameless compensations which after all to most of us alone make life really worth living.

Thackeray was born and brought up as an English gentleman. His parents were married and lived in India, belonging to the great British civil service there. But his father died when he was young, and his mother married again and took him to England. He had his small fortune, and little thought of worrying about money till in middle life he found his substance gone through injudicious speculation, and his pen the principal means by which he could earn a living. He married and had several daughters, but his wife became insane. This was the only cloud on his domestic life.

Thackeray's early books are not remarkable. Samuel Titmarsh and even *Barry Lyndon* are not and never have been popular. It was not until 1848, a dozen years after Dickens (a year the younger man) had become famous with *Pickwick*, that Thackeray really took his place among the great English novelists on the publication of *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray's novels never attained the sale that Dickens's did, and never yielded anything like as much money.

The sub-title of *Vanity Fair* was "A Novel Without a Hero." The heroine, *Becky Sharpe*, however,

was hero and heroine in one. It is said that Thackeray's women are weak; but no finer portrayal of feminine character is to be found in modern literature than that of Becky Sharpe in *Vanity Fair*.

The Newcomes is considered a greater novel by some. It presents much more lovable characters, Colonel Newcome being one of the most lovable in fiction; and Clive Newcome, and Ethel Newcome whom he loves, are of the same stuff as the well bred, educated people we see about us and number as our friends and most cherished companions.

Pendennis is in the same vein as *The Newcomes*, and involves some of the same characters, but it is not so strong a novel by any means, though perhaps more sentimental.

Henry Esmond is an historical novel, and may perhaps be considered the highest type of historical novel ever written. It never has had the popularity of Scott's, but its characters are undoubtedly much stronger and more carefully drawn than any of his. Lady Castlewood and Beatrix are as real as if they had lived in the flesh, and yet as interesting as any a romancer ever imagined.

His fifth great novel is *The Virginians*, a sort of sequel to *Esmond*.

Only five novels! but they are of a kind to do for Thackeray what *Les Misérables* did for Victor Hugo as compared with the popular and productive Dumas. Thackeray and Hugo are both most admired, and rank highest in the literary firmament, in spite of the perennial popularity of Dickens and Dumas.

We have now considered the great romantic artists, who cared for point of view, Gothic castles, and the events of history; and likewise the great domestic story tellers, who, like Dickens, have sacrificed plot and scene to character portrayal.

We have reserved until the present a novelist of France who may ultimately be counted the greatest master of modern fiction. He was a contemporary of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas, but he took no part in the romantic movement. Indeed, the critics of his own day would have nothing to do with him. His works, far more numerous than Scott's and almost as bulky, sold in sufficient numbers to enable him to pay the debts his lack of business experience caused him to contract in various speculations; but even his own fellow citizens of Tours snubbed him so unmercifully that in sorrow he decided not to give to that town his large and valuable library, as he had intended to do. Only recently have his books been adequately translated into English, and now only a portion are accessible. He is the last great classic to come upon the stage; and the most thoughtful young writers of to-day whisper among themselves that the Master is Balzac.

Victor Hugo, Dumas, George Sand, the representatives of the romantic movement, are fascinating story-tellers, but they are not true to human nature. Their works abound in glaring faults in the grammar of human life. They were so wrapped up in the thrills their tales were to excite that they had small time to think seriously about the minuter facts. They have never analysed the principles of

life. What observation chanced to bring them they used in the most effective way; and as we read *Les Misérables* and *Consuelo* we are shocked at every point by the inconsistency of the characters, the false ring of the speeches they make and the acts they perform. The colour has been laid on thick and hot, and flames with overpowering brilliancy; but the drawing will not bear close inspection.

In Scott we find no such inaccuracies of characterization, however many faults of grammar there may be. The Englishman is a master at characterization, and in no great English novelists do we find the inaccuracies of thought and feeling which characterized the French romancers. But in all Scott's pageantry, with his hundreds of figures, we find but relatively few types, and even they are not very profound or wonderful. They are the common, everyday men Scott knew, dressed up in the clothes of history and romance. And though they are all true enough as far as they go, the same type appears again and again with a different feather in his cap and a fresh name to be hailed by. And Dickens and Thackeray have drawn but a few types, those they themselves had come personally in contact with and known by habit and instinct. These they have immortalized, and repeated often enough for us to understand them in all their phases. The types in their books are drawn unconsciously. They were no deep students of the varieties of human nature, nor of the underlying principles of life. Their time and effort were devoted to the art of

representation, in which, each in his own peculiar line, they excelled all other men.

But Balzac essayed to write the whole Comedy of Humanity (he called his books the *Comedie Humaine*). He takes his characters one after the other, beginning with Parisian life, and then taking up the life of the provinces, political life, military life, and in each presenting a series of characters that accurately represent the historical types of his own age in France. He is a Frenchman, his characters and his ideals are French, and he omits the innocent lovely rose of English purity: he writes no idylls. But a person with broad mind and catholic tastes cannot help feeling the masterly touch.

His personal history is that of a worker. Before he was thirty he had published a dozen novels to which he did not attach his name. They were for practice. Then he came out with *The Chouans*, which attracted some attention. In the next few years he wrote and gave to the world some ninety compositions long and short, mostly full-fledged books.

His friends had told him he had no talent, and his native town never honoured him; but by industry alone he overcame all difficulties, and by sheer force of character took his place among the great novelists of his age. Most of the money he earned was devoted to paying off his debts; and when that was accomplished and he had married the lady he loved, he died.

Not all of Balzac's novels will be liked by the

English reader, and they differ immensely in subject, character, and interest.

The most popular of his stories, perhaps, because it treats of the rotten though dramatic life of Paris, is *Père Goriot*, the story of a simple old man whose daughters become fashionable, and to whose passions he is made to minister, while his own comforts of life are heartlessly sacrificed.

Rivaling *Père Goriot* as Balzac's masterpiece is *Eugenie Grandet*, a story of country life utterly devoid of the excitement with which the Parisian story abounds. Eugenie is the daughter of a rich miser, who deprives her and her mother almost of the necessities of life. She meets and learns to love her cousin, Charles Grandet. He goes to the West Indies where he begins to build his fortunes with the savings Eugenie has given him. But the girl's mother dies, and then her father, and she is left a rich heiress. Not knowing this, Charles writes asking her to release him that he may marry an heiress. Eugenie never thinks of her own sacrifice, but gives him his liberty, and even secretly pays his father's debts lest they hamper him in his career. She ends her life in works of philanthropy.

It is a simple story, but told with the hard exactness of fate and truth, and it is this profound truth that makes it appeal to us so powerfully.

Many are fond of *The Country Doctor*. The first half of the book tells the simple life and good works of this remarkable man; but the intense interest of the story is in the recital of the romantic

early life of this strange man—his own story of himself which fills the second half of the book.

Cousin Pons tells the story of a collector of curios, for whose property various relatives are intriguing. Cousin Bette teaches us the lengths to which a Parisian middle-class family will go to get the money to maintain their respectability, and the catastrophes which are likely to follow when character is rotten at the bottom. *Madame de Langeais* is one of the shorter and more exciting stories of Parisian love. *César Birroteau* portrays the typical life of a Parisian lawyer, and *The House of Nucingen* that of a Parisian banker, while in *The Illustrious Gaudissart* we have the French drummer or travelling salesman.

In still another series of novels, much less generally read, Balzac goes into philosophy and even the mysticisms of Swedenborg. The most philosophic of these novels is *Louis Lambert*, the most mystical and Swedenborgian is *Seraphita*, the story of an angel, so to speak. *The Magic Skin* is symbolistic, and *The Search for the Absolute* gives us most realistically the mystic and self-sacrificing life of an inventor.

Zola has attempted to do for his time what Balzac did for his, and in stories of the Rougon-Macquart family tells us the life histories of as varied a series of characters. The thing that made Balzac great, however, is his profound knowledge of human nature and the laws of human life, while Zola is bent on telling the thrilling stories he has found in

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different classes of society which, as a journalist, he has investigated

Balzac and Zola handle contemporary life in much the same spirit that the romantic novelists handle the life of a past age; but Balzac is also a realistic student of character, and the interest in his characters predominates over the interest in his subjects and scenes. He is as much a master of description, however, as Scott or Victor Hugo. But much of Balzac's and Zola's realism is distasteful to the English or American reader. To be appreciated they must be read intellectually and not emotionally.

Among the great realists, or novelists of character and domestic life, we must include the women who have written fiction. Of these the greatest is George Eliot, whose novels rank below those of Dickens and Thackeray only because they are lacking in humour and fun. They are very serious, but they give us women as they really are in heart and soul and emotion. The best of George Eliot's novels is *Middlemarch*, the story of an English country village and especially of an interesting educated young woman, Dorothea Casaubon. But there are other and almost equally interesting quiet English characterizations. More dramatic in its plot is *Adam Bede*, which tells the story of a girl who had an illegitimate child which she destroyed. *The Mill on the Floss* begins by realistically describing the everyday life of two children, a boy and a girl, and many will find the first half of the book very dull and commonplace. The last half is dramatic enough, how-

ever, to make up for the dullness of the first part. Daniel Deronda is considered less successful, though *Silas Marner* is a classic. It is a shorter story, of a certain phase of English country life. These are practically all of George Eliot's works, the two or three other books being hardly fascinating enough to hold the modern reader.

To many Jane Austen is greater even than George Eliot. She wrote in the early part of the century, even before the appearance of the *Waverley* novels; but her stories are read as much to-day as they ever were. They are fine and exceedingly true portrayals of the uneventful but interesting heart life of a number of different young women in English country villages. Some consider *Emma* her greatest story; but it is less interesting than *Sense and Sensibility* (a study of two girls, one representing sense and the other sensibility) and *Pride and Prejudice* (the story of the marrying off of five daughters, one of whom is especially interesting and is the heroine). Jane Austen is notable in that she has a lively though quiet sense of humour that runs through all her work.

Another charming, simple, and rather amusing study of English village life is Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford*, a book well worth reading if one is interested in the unheroic struggles and devotions of women.

Of modern writers in this style, Mary Wilkins is probably the best, her short stories being superior to her novels.

There are two women's novels entirely different from any that had gone before or that have come

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after. They are *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte and *Wurthering Heights* by Emily Bronte.

The lives of these girls was sad and unfortunate. They belonged to a respectable family, and throughout maintained their respectability shut in by conventionality and suffering from poverty. *Jane Eyre* is a girl whose mind and not her face was her fortune. The story is in reality the autobiography of the inner tempestuous life of Charlotte Bronte herself. Jane is governess in the family of an eccentric man named Rochester, who was at one time the hero of half the women of England. He loved Jane and asked her to marry him, but at the altar it is discovered that he has a wife living, whom he had looked on as dead because she was insane. So the lovers are parted to be united only in a tragedy.

Wurthering Heights is a story of love and revenge within the conventionalities of English higher-class life, and extends over two generations. As a study of love and the far-reaching effects of its disappointment, it is a powerful though gloomy story, and by no means so finely artistic as *Jane Eyre*.

Another woman's work in a class by itself is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which to this day is found in the list of half dozen best selling books, equaling the sales of the latest current novel. It is a wonderfully humorous, pathetic, and sympathetic picture of Southern life before the war, and probably as exact as most historical fiction, though many Southerners violently resent its claim to truthfulness.

CHAPTER XI.

*THE SHORT STORY—POE, HAWTHORNE,
MAUPASSANT.*

As we have seen, the original form of modern fiction was that of the short story—the tavern tale rendered in classic language by Boccaccio in *The Decameron* and by the unknown author of *The Arabian Nights*.

All the great novelists wrote more or less short stories. Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are classics. Balzac was a master of the short story, and in "A Passion in the Desert" and "La Grande Bretèche" we have two of the most powerful stories ever written. Dickens and Thackeray are also short story tellers of rare accomplishments. "A Christmas Carol," "The Chimes," and "The Cricket on the Hearth" are among Dickens's best work; and scattered through his novels we will find such complete narratives as "The Five Sisters of York" in *Nicholas Nickleby*. "The Princess's Tragedy" is a chapter in Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*.

But Edgar Allan Poe is the father of the modern short story, the short story as a refined work of art rather than merely a simple short narrative.

There is an impression that all of Poe's stories are gruesome, but this is not true. The most famous of his narratives are his three great detective

stories, "The Gold-Bug," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Purloined Letter." Only the second has the elements of terror in it. "The Gold-Bug" is the original treasure-finding and cipher-reading story. "The Purloined Letter" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" introduce Dupin, the French amateur detective, father of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (who by the way is an excellent son). That Poe was a real and not a sham detective he demonstrated in his analysis of the real case of Marie Roget, in which he used the newspaper reports of a New York mystery and came to conclusions that were afterward verified.

Another kind of story which Poe originated was the tale of imaginary science. His stories of this kind are none of them gruesome, with the single exception of "The Case of M. Valdemar." The first story he wrote of this kind was "Ms. Found in a Bottle." This was followed by "Hans Pfaal's Voyage to the Moon," "A Descent into the Maëlstrom," "Mellonta Tauta," and "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherezade."

A still different type of story is his prose poems such as the beautiful "Eleonora," and his studies in landscape such as "The Island of the Fay," "The Domain of Arnheim," and "Landor's Cottage."

His terrible and thrilling stories, by which he is best known, have never been surpassed. The best is "William Wilson," the story of a double; but still more gruesome are "The Black Cat," "Berenice," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Cask of Amontillado." Less horrible and unnatural, but curious

and interesting, are "The Man of the Crowd," "Hop-Frog," and "The Pit and the Pendulum." His "Fall of the House of Usher" is unique.

Poe's life was one of hardship and unhappiness, and he was terribly libelled by his biographer Griswold, who hated him for the scathing reviews Poe had written of his books. So the great poet and story-writer has been painted in the popular mind much blacker than he really is, according to the latest and most authentic evidence. But he was certainly the most original genius America has produced. When he had made a success in one kind of story he did not care to go on writing more stories of that kind, but originated another type.

Hawthorne is better known as a novelist, the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Blithedale Romance*, and *Marble Faun*, than as a short-story writer; but he alone among Americans has approached Poe as a teller of tales. His reputation was first made by two volumes of short stories called *Twice-Told Tales*, among which are the deeply interesting "Gray Champion," "The Great Carbuncle," "David Swan," "Howe's Masquerade," "The Ambitious Guest," and "The Three-fold Destiny." Many like the *Mosses from an Old Manse* better, considering "The Birthmark" his masterpiece. "Drowne's Wooden Image" is a remarkable tale, and "Rapaccini's Daughter" (the girl who was brought up on poisons and whose kiss was poison) is most weird. The most popular story for children is "The Snow Image," and "The Great Stone Face" (which I like best of all) appeals alike

to young and old. "Ethan Brand" is another good story in this volume, and children will be fascinated by "Little Daffydowndilly."

Hawthorne's stories are all more or less fantastic allegories, written in unexceptionably beautiful and perfect English. The author was a recluse, and his stories are stories of loneliness in one form or another. Those who like solitude will be very fond of him; those who like gaiety, liveliness, and society, will find him depressing.

The other great American short story writers include Bret Harte, author of "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat"; Edward Everett Hale, author of "The Man Without a Country"; Frank Stockton, author of "The Lady or the Tiger?" and Mary E. Wilkins. With these may be included Thomas Hardy's "Life's Little Ironies," which are full of fun.

More perfect in his art than either Poe or Hawthorne is the modern writer Guy de Maupassant. His stories are most of them very short; but not a word is wasted, and they tell as much as stories much longer. His most perfect tales are not accessible in English because they are slightly improper. The two best are said to be "Boule de Suif" (Butter-Ball) and "La Maison Tellier" (Madame Tellier's Girls, or The Tellier Establishment). The thirteen tales translated by Jonathan Sturgis in "The Odd Number" are unexceptionable, however, and intensely interesting.

The French have perfected the artistic short story or *conte* as they call it, and there are many

good tales in that language. One of the most famous is the old-fashioned "Paul and Virginia," a simple rustic love story, and Prosper Mérimée, the contemporary of Balzac, wrote some excellent tales. One might mention also Daudet with his "Pope's Mule," Gauthier, and Zola's "Attack on the Mill."

But far stronger stories than those just mentioned are the great Russian tales of Tolstoi and Turgenev. Tolstoi is better known by his great novels, "The Cossacks," "War and Peace," and "Anna Karénina." But "The Long Exile," "What Men Live By," and other short tales are unsurpassed for dramatic force. Turgenev's "First Love" is a rather long short story, but an intensely interesting one. "A Lear of the Steppes" is regarded as his classic. But there are others equally good.

Of modern writers of short stories Kipling is doubtless the greatest; but his early books such as "Plain Tales from the Hills," "Soldiers Three," "Phantom Rickshaw," "Wee Willie Winkie," etc., are probably better than the later ones, though in the later books a strong story will be found here and there.

No greater short story has been published in modern times than Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and Gilbert Parker has published some excellent short stories in "Pierre and His People."

NOTE.—Many of the stories here referred to may be found in "A Selection from the World's Greatest Short Stories," edited by Sherwin Cody.

CHAPTER XII.

CLASSIC STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

The boy or girl who has grown up without reading Robinson Crusoe, the Arabian Nights and Gulliver's Travels is to be pitied; but it is to be presumed that there are few such. These books are good alike for young and old.

For young children fairy tales are usually considered the first to become familiar with, and of these the best are Grimm's and Hans Christian Andersen's. There are many volumes variously edited, and all are fairly good. A modern fairy tale that is also a classic is Kingsley's Water Babies, and even better are Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Kipling's Jungle Book.

There are also Æsop's Fables.

But when boys and girls get a little older they want to find what is to them a really good book. I know none better than Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women. It is the story of four girls and a boy; but boys will like it almost as well as the girls will.

Boys will be especially interested in the lives of great men, and of these none is better than Franklin's Autobiography. He tells just how he worked, and what he did, and how he succeeded, and tells it in simple, natural English. And next to this one will like a good life of Washington or Lincoln, of which there are many.

Hawthorne wrote many good stories for young people, and of these the simplest are his Wonder

Book and Tanglewood Tales from the ancient Greek, and his Biographical Stories of Great Men. But readers a little older will like even better such stories as "The Snow-Image," "The Great Stone Face," etc.

There is a remarkable book not very much known, entitled *Moby-Dick*, or the Great White Whale, by Herman Melville. It is not all as interesting as the last part, in which the giant whale named Moby-Dick is hunted down and killed, though not until he has sunk the ship and boats of the men who have pursued him and taken his life.

For adventure there are no more classic books than Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake*, and Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *David Balfour*, and some will wish to read his beautiful *Child's Garden of Verse*. Not quite so literary but equally interesting are *The Boys of Seventy-Six*, *Green Mountain Boys*, *Scottish Chiefs*, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, *Dana's Two Years before the Mast*, and *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

Last of all we must mention *Tom Brown's School-days*, which, though very English, is very interesting. *John Halifax, Gentleman*, by Miss Mulock, is also a fine English story.

Though not stories precisely, Lamb's *Tales from Shakspere* and Dickens's *Child's History of England* are quite as fascinating as if they were genuine stories.

In these days the Bible seems to be neglected somewhat, and not all children are familiar with

the fine stories for young people with which the Old Testament is filled. There are, to be sure, uninteresting genealogies and other things mixed in with the stories; but there is nothing in Grimm or Andersen to equal the stories of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel, of Noah and the Flood, of David and Goliath, of Daniel in the Lion's Den, and of Jonah and the Whale.

INDEX OF RECOMMENDED BOOKS

(With Dates)

The following are the books the author would choose for a small public or private library for general reading. Of course this list should be supplemented by a judicious selection of books on history, science, and economics, as well as works of reference:

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